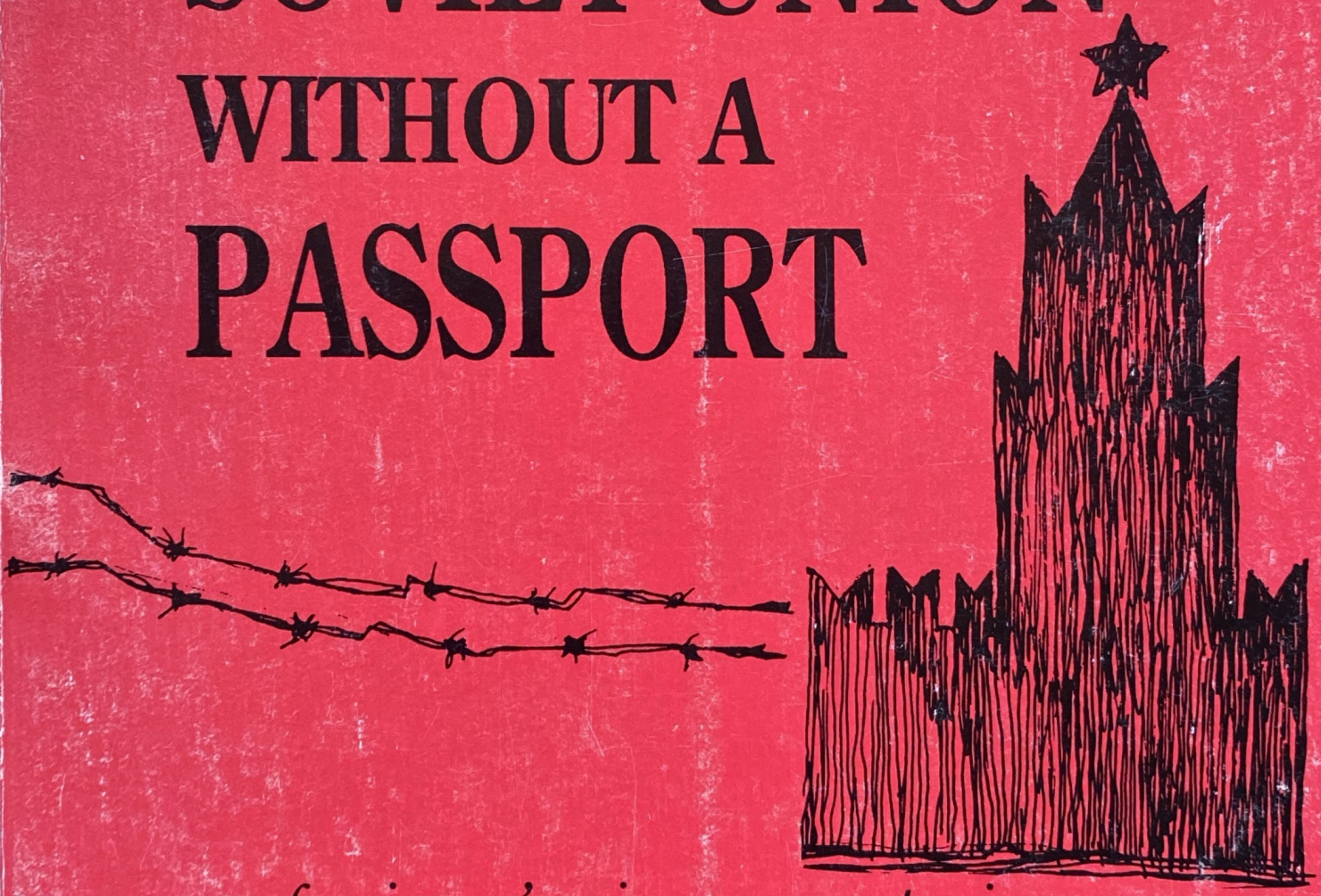
John Urwich

INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION WITHOUT A PASSPORT



a foreigner's nine-year experience in the death camps of the Soviet empire

INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION WITHOUT A PASSPORT

Cover by Rafael Aronov

JOHN URWICH
(FERRY)

INSIDE THE SOVIET UNION
WITHOUT A PASSPORT

VOLUME I

New York, 1989

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 89-50018
ISBN: 0-9624144-0-9

First edition

Printed in the U. S. A.

— Chronicle inspired by a period of shabby subsistence, written more for contemporaries than for posterity.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO:

— the countless millions of innocent people dispatched to the next world by the compassion of Communism.

— my fellows in struggle and suffering, who in spite of all risks, smuggled out a great part of the documentary evidence which serves as basic material for this book, smuggled out of that huge prison which is the Soviet Union.

— those who fought and suffered side by side with me but cannot be identified for their safety or because they have been forgotten.

— those who, in the future, will continue to take part in the struggle for the destruction of the most diabolical system ever known in the history of mankind.

John Urwich (Ferry)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of this work would not have been possible without the dedicated work of Thomas A. Perry, Ph. D., and Michael Donlon, M. A., who did the editing work; Virgil A. Buzea and Elisabeta Buzea, who did most of the technical work; and the Romanian and East European Anticommunist Resistance Movement, who supplied some of the materials contained herein.

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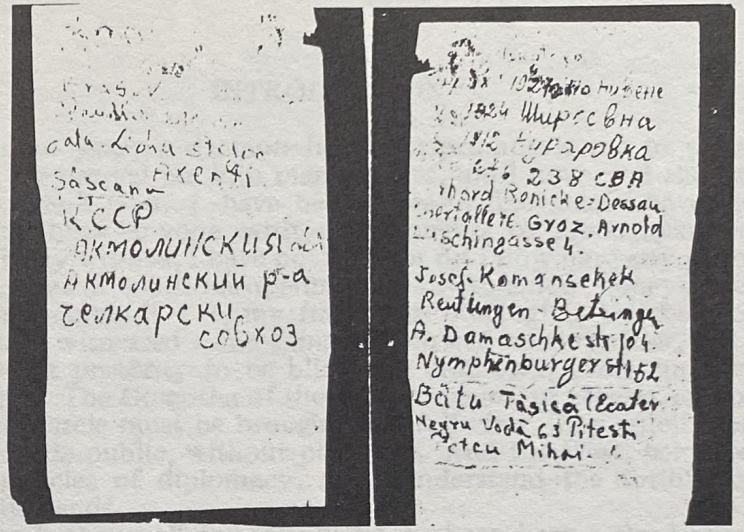
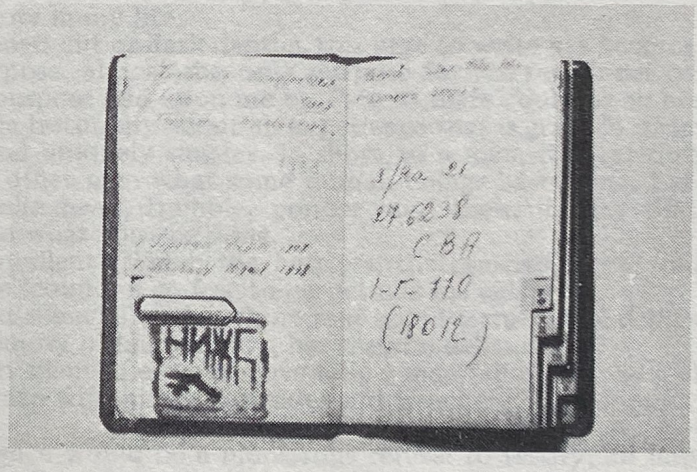
Finally it was all over; all had given themselves up, of their own free will, into the hands of those whom they had most to fear.

Aesop said to them: "The fowls in a certain land panicked when frightened just by the roar of a lion who had wandered into their neighborhood. So they sought protection at the side of another beast, that spoke to them of peaceful coexistence and of providing them shelter. But all of them ended up by being devoured by the beast."

La Bruyere: *Les Characteres*, chapter XII



. . . thousands of cigarette papers smuggled out in different ways, which have served as basic material evidence for the contents of this book



. . . notebook containing names and dates of certain persons over a period of time, persons in Soviet concentration camps . . . author's meal ticket in Concentration Camp 11, Iavas 385-11 or P. O. Box Moscow 5110-33, 11/24/1955

INTRODUCTION

For some years a daemon has been prompting me to write. Though life has led me into many follies, until now — at the age of 44 — thank God, I have been a reasonable man. I have not wished to bless anyone with my thoughts or preoccupations. As God is my witness, I have not had nor do I now have any philosophical ideas or solutions opening the way to a new, honey-sweet epoch for mankind! Yet, my fingers are itching! In this flesh of mine I have witnessed some things which had no chronicler, and I do not want posterity to be blind and unknowing, like our contemporaries. The Golgotha of the Eastern plains, of Siberia, and of the Arctic Circle must be brought into full view. This crucifixion must be made public, without palliation. And the West, bemused by the policies of diplomacy, must understand the futility of washing its hands.

So now I set myself to writing! I have been born a third time, and been given the opportunity to write a chronicle of events, some until now unknown and unrecorded, some distorted by hired scribblers. I write in a hurry, in a great hurry. In such a hurry as never before in my life.

Awakened out of dark depths, this urge to write has become the main purpose, almost the only purpose for the remainder of my life — a purpose laid upon me by Fate so there could be an honest and public testimony about an experience that is grave in its implications and uniquely sinister. In short, as a man, it is my duty to relate to other men what some human beings have done. Let my readers take heed, tremble, ponder, and then, if they think it proper, do what must be done.

Remain silent? Watch the helpless, the crushed, the doomed? Watch the scoundrel go free to perpetuate his villainy?

Remain silent? Let the whore rant about virtue while delighting in the memory of her pleasure, her ecstatic debauchery?

Remain silent? Let your naive fellow man fall under the spell of the magician with his masquerades and treachery? Not unmask the villain?

My silence would be a monstrous refusal to testify, an impediment to justice, a contribution to judicial error.

I am an eyewitness. It is my duty to step forward in the Great Trial. I am happy to do so, for I am happy to be alive and free once more. I am happy, though against my will I was sucked into a strange whirlwind; I am happy that I was enriched by that

experience, though terribly shaken. I am happy that my understanding was purified and that now I can keep my oath to those left behind in whose mouths hope has turned to dust. I am very happy that out of that hell my good fortune brought me out into the light again, where I can serve some useful purpose with my testimony before the Tribunal of History in the Free World, or what is left of it that is still unatained spiritually. My flesh burns, my stomach hardens, my soul stiffens in my bitterness.

How shall I begin? What words can describe the horrors which by now I myself can hardly believe? How shall I unfold my story as as to keep truth from being mistaken for fantsy or even propaganda, the counterpart of that other shameless propaganda concocted so skillfully as to pass for the truth? I shall reveal names and facts. I shall quote witnesses. I shall give details, but only to the extent that they will not bring down retribution upon those who talked to me — wherever they may now be, and if they still live. About some, one cannot speak without aggravating their persecution. And I must face one main obstacle: the incredulity of man when faced with evidence of such inhumanity. These facts are so unbelievable that I still question them, against the testimony on my own flesh. I doubt myself, and I surprise myself by shouting to myself that I was the central character in events matched only by the ten plagues of the biblical Egypt. I sit down to dinner with my family and I shiver. I see how they throw away bread; they dislike the meal. I cannot comprehend their whims, and they cannot understand my dazed look and the silence which takes hold of me. They cannot understand the spectre of hunger which flashes before me: that terrible hunger which once pinched my bowels year after year, unrelieved for even a single day or even a single moment. I sense the torture and burning in my fellows too. I relive the pain, as tormenting and terrible as in the past. At my side I see the thousands, the hundreds of thousands about me, crying in their pain and dying of hunger — and I still doubt.

The weeping of 42,000,000 souls rings in my ears (for that is the official count made public on March 6, 1953, after the death of Stalin, the count of those in the "reeducation" camps — a massive bundle of rags, people deported, detained, or prisoners of war). In my mind I see sunken cheeks, ulcerated faces, legs swollen with endema; and I cannot believe it. I see the face of Sublieutenant Serafim, son of a jurist from Romanian Targu-Jiu, who on the day he sneaked into the kitchen went berserk and stuffed himself to death with food and as he was carried, dying, to the hsopital could only scream, "My spoon!" Or the hunt for

snakes to eat by the Hungarian pharmacist Nagy. . . Or the pursuit of cats and rats for food by the Romanian pilot Gafencu (nephew of the former Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs). Or the Italian Podio, who ended up eating clover and grass . . . Or the German Berg who ate his own vomit . . . Or Ion Mihailescu, captain of the general staff of the Romanian army, who, left without water, had to drink his own urine. Today, how can I believe all this?

Today, when I think back to those I left behind, I choke on my bread. I feel a lump in my throat. And I stare at the horizon, remembering every degree of misery out there in the Arctic Circle, where I had been led by Fate, without a passport — and I still cannot believe it!

THE RHINOCEROS

Have you heard of Eugen Ionescu? Have you seen his play *The Rhinoceros*? I have read it, and I have seen it on the stage. I shivered, but not from aesthetic emotion. I was shaken and overwhelmed by its strength, its vision, and by its shocking message, a message which I felt only once before when I read Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*.

In *The Rhinoceros* there is a certain man named Berenger. You might think him a fictional character. He isn't. Berenger is not Berenger, but you and I, and thousands like you and me, who quarrel with our "Daisys," who come to doubt ourselves and our rights. We feel it deeply but, as if paralyzed, end up doubting and asking ourselves if what we saw was not actually a dream. We keep on saying, "Are we not somehow mistaken?"

"What if they, the Rhinoceros, are right? How beautiful Rhinoceros really are! How I long to be like them! I have been blind. If I only had a horn! If I could only get rid of this disgusting white skin! But it's too late! I cannot change any more! I want to, I want to very much, but I can't! Maybe I shall grow a horn, too, and I won't be so ashamed of myself! So I shall be able to join the others! I wish I had a hard skin and their splendid color, their decent nakedness . . . without hair. Their songs have charm, a charm that is somehow rugged but indisputable. If I could only imitate them! But I can't now! I can't make myself do it! I feel remorse . . . I should have followed them! Now it's too late! Alas, I shall never be a rhinoceros! Never! Never! I want it so much, but I can't! I cannot look at myself anymore, I am ashamed! How ugly I am! O, how miserable are those who want to preserve their individuality, their uniqueness! What an ugly thing is a smooth brow with no horn on it! One, or two horns change the appearance; the face doesn't look so flabby!"

"Maybe it is they who are normal and we who are abnormal," said Daisy. Then she added, "There is no such thing as an absolute. It is the people who are in the right, not you, not I! How conceited to think you are right! Everywhere, They. Everywhere, They. For a long time now the Authorities have sided with Them! We are alone. They have all gone mad. The world is sick. Everybody's sick. We must find a modus vivendi, a mutual understanding. Let's teach ourselves their psychology. Their language. Let's save mankind!"

In the end, deserted by Daisy — the female by whom Berenger

(as a new Adam) hoped to regenerate mankind — and tired of so many worries, and shaken, both Berenger and I, and maybe you too, after a brusque shudder, have shaken ourselves and said to ourselves: "Well, come what may, I shall protect myself to the very end. We shall protect ourselves against all of Them! I am the last human being! I won't give up! My gun! My gun! I shall remain a human being to the end!"

"I won't give up," Berenger ended, with faith in the future of mankind.

I have not written any literary criticism or theatrical reviews, but I would like to point out that in his play *The Rhinoceros* Eugen Ionescu grasped the essence of human nature. His, or rather, his hero's doubts as well as his final resolution are marked by authentic humor. I mean authentic because Eugen Ionescu is a great writer in spite of some adverse criticism of him and in spite of his shortcomings as a human being.

What kind of disappointment, what kind of strange life experiences, what kind of intuition inspired that shuddering but optimistic finale? All I know is that, after a long delay by the East in recognizing Ionescu's greatness as a playwright, *The Rhinoceros* with Berenger, its hero, gave broad opportunity in the East for a wide range of discussions, exegeses, and protests. But, say the literary critics of the East, *The Rhinoceros* could not possibly be glancing at the "peaceful" socialist and communist world, but only at the brutality of Italian Fascism or the barbarous cruelty of German Nazism.

I cannot deny this, but neither is it exact or complete. In spite of these Eastern critics who have been conditioned to the taste of honey and do not dare play a tune other than that of the "truth" imposed upon them, I am convinced that Ionescu saw with my eyes and my soul — saw from the Elbe of 1945 through all of Eastern Europe, up to the 70th parallel, to Arkhangelsk, to Vorkuta, Pechora, Iavas, Potma, Gorky and Moscow, to the Crimea and the Caucasus. And that it was from there — from the cruel and harsh reality — that he conceived *The Rhinoceros*. Because only there, on that one sixth of the globe so praised as a new and superior form of social order, only there that a herd of rhinoceros lives. It is there that they discipline themselves strictly so as not to betray, oppose, contradict, or complain against the biggest rhinoceros with the biggest horn and the biggest rump. They heard Berenger, but with their own ears, heard him singing amidst the forests and tundra, a parody of a patriotic song composed by Isaak Dunaevsky. The words were those of Grama

of Buzau, Romania, a former teacher and Russian language inspector. At the time he was a prisoner, not yet turned into a rhinoceros. The words were:

Forever my beloved country,
Now filled with prison camps,
There never was a more unhappy land,
Never was and never will be.

Besides the unexpected insertion of this song into the play, a verse which under other circumstances might not have been to the liking of a distinguished playwright like Ionescu, I have another play for him. Somewhere, near the Arctic Circle, a Romanian who was once a high school teacher in Bucharest, Romania, entertained us with two works which he had written on birch tree bark from the Valdai Plateau. The first play brought him deportation to Vorkuta, where he remained confined for several years. The other play, which only his intimate friends knew about, brought him no recognition. It was entitled *Balabamonti*. Can't you sense in it overtones like those of *The Rhinoceros*? It is strange how these two plays — the prisoner's and Ionescu's — coincide in their essences. They have the same theme and the same agony. Coincidences have happened in the past and they can be explained by the common ferment of the time. However, it is a pity that the name of the author of *Balabamonti* must be kept buried in silence. This play was written in 1944, and the author had been a prisoner since 1942. I have received information that he later returned home, to communist Romania, between 1958 and 1960, that he is still alive but not a teacher any more, and that his plays are not performed on the Romanian stage. He does menial work. He never was elected to the Romanian Academy — by any means!

In our communist society, without "exploitation of classes" and "class antagonisms," the divisions and contradictions between manual and intellectual work have disappeared. The basis for advancement and material gain is rhinocerotic criticism and "self-criticism."

I know that truth can stir up storms and bring about hatreds, but I prefer these to dissimulations and diplomatic legerdemain, aware that my testimony will not be liked by some diplomats or by some men of letters lodged in comfortable government apartments or working out of T. A. S. S.

I can see them coming, with their unrestrained rage, blind protests, incriminations spewed second-hand by their agents, paid

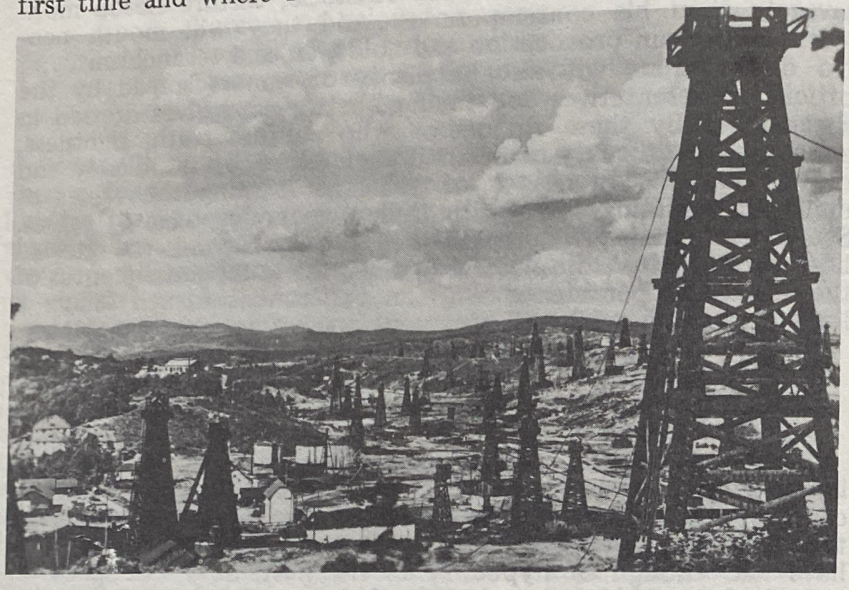
or forced to play a game from which they cannot withdraw without bringing reprisals down upon them. Oh, yes! In the name of peace, of science, of truth they would burn Giordano Bruno at the stake a second time, banish Aristotle, torture Aesop more savagely than his contemporaries. And they will mouth neo-Marxism, scream provocation and cold war, and revanchism . . . . No doubt, there will also be plenty of rumors spread by the official representatives and their go-betweens, wolves dressed in sheepskins! By these rhinoceros who confuse truth, rightness, goodness, and beauty with their own cause by mindlessly and rudely equating thousands of years of learning the values of mankind, equating them with their own hodgepodge of values. See the real state of things in their own homeland: the crushed life uprooted from its natural abodes, the cruel consequences of their diabolic persistence with an experiment turned failure a long time ago, while all the while trying to charm mankind.

WHO AM I ?

As I have already said, I am aware that truth can produce hatred, but whatever the risks, I prefer the truth because, in my case, my hatred will cause less pain and fewer tragic consequences than the elegant resonance and honeyed talk of the enemy. We have had enough of hypocrisy in the past. So I will speak on behalf of the dead and on behalf of those still living but lingering near death. It is my duty and my right to expose this stench. This right I have earned with blood and pain. But you may ask: Who am I to dare raise my voice at this crossroads in the history of man?

I was born in Romania, in the beautiful valley of the Prahova River, a sub-Carpathian region, a rich land with many orchards, cattle, and an abundance of wheat, vegetables, and, especially oil — in one word, it was a land of wealth. In Moreni, my native town, even the air smells of oil. My father was an oil-tank maker, a craft which he practiced for the Columbia Oil Company. He was a master of his trade. Besides myself there was a sister. My name is Ion, the most frequent name among Romanians — equivalent of Jean, Johann, John, and Ivan in other languages. Until I was fifteen I did not know anything except that I was a Romanian. All of a sudden I began to feel (today I am well aware of what was going on but at fifteen I was too young to understand) that I was not a Romanian any more. To be more exact, I was

compelled to face the fact that I was no longer a Romanian: My father and all his family were expelled from Romania. We were forced to leave Moreni where I had seen the light of day for the first time and where I used to play with youngsters of my own



Moreni, my native town . . .

age, the town of our neighbors and acquaintances. To leave my hills and the paths of my wanderings. To leave the air rich with the smell of fruits and oil. I was leaving not only Moreni but my native country and the people that I had grown up with. My father had become an undesirable, a suspect. All I knew was that Father, like all fathers, could not be anything but a good, hard-working, law-abiding man. Suspected of what? As I found out later, Father had socialist beliefs and around 1941 was put into a concentration camp with other suspects in the vicinity of Targu-Jiu (the hometown of the famous Romanian sculptor Brancusi). These concentration camps were something new to me. By now there were more camps, but the two near Targu-Jiu were the most widely known to the public. One was for nationalist Romanian legionnaires. The other was for communists and social-democrats.

(The reason for two camps was so as not to offend either political group by jailing its members with those of the opposing movement.) At that time German troops were stationed in Romania for their future security from the rear and for future military operations (not yet spelled out in detail). And these precautions — like any other such steps — had to hurt some people, among whom we happened to be included. Since my father was born in the former "prison of nations," the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in a remote village of Ardeal, he was sent back to his birthplace (in accordance with widespread police-state practice), which by this time had been unjustly returned by the Germans and Italians to Hungary. In Hungary itself, the political situation was similar to that of Romania: a state asserting its superiority, reasoning that the best way to get rid of this uninvited guest from Romania, who had no identification except a release paper from a camp for suspicious persons in Romania and his socialist identity card, was internment in another camp.

Both we and Father were sent back and forth, today in a camp, the next day set free. Finally it was decided that we should be sent to work somewhere in Germany. These petty and big hardships may not be interesting to the reader of this book, but for us, as human beings, they were weighty matters. I should like to mention, before proceeding further, that this is the tragedy of border inhabitants of most countries.

My family was of mixed ancestry. Mother and Father had an approximately equal number of relatives among the various ethnic groups which happened historically to wander into this corner of the world. Among our Romanian relatives, I want to mention the well known and world famous tenor Traian Grozavescu. My mother, chiefly of German descent, was born in Banat, hence by right a Romanian citizen. In spite of the fact that in our home three languages were spoken — Romanian, German, and Hungarian — I mastered only Romanian and German, and I spoke a little French, which I, like almost every Romanian child, took in school. As for Hungarian, as a child I did not want to hear a word of it. I could not stand it; Romanians can hardly tolerate Hungarians, and vice versa. From my Romanian ancestry I inherited this antagonism towards the Hungarians, a trait which (as I found out later) characterizes other nationalities who cannot stand each other: Poles and Russians, Ukrainians and Russians, Lithuanians and Russians, French and Germans, and — though belonging to the same Semitic race — Jews and Arabs. In my mind I was a true-born Romanian, even though we had relatives of Hungarian blood.

Some of them have become world renowned: the Hollywood singer Gyula Szanto and the actress Maria Szanto of Budapest. But in spite of this aversion to the Hungarian language, this daredevil Wallachian (as my Hungarian relatives nicknamed me because I stubbornly refused to speak Hungarian) had to learn that language! Life is hard, and willy-nilly it teaches you many things! As to my schooling, what can I say? Just think about it. How much can you learn when you are bandied back and forth from camp to camp, and from misery to misery. Time passed, and one morning I woke up fifteen years old. I was well built, muscular like an athlete in the making.

During one of those constant harassments to which my father was subjected, while we were readied for a transit camp before being taken to work in Germany, something happened which was to play a decisive role in my life. In spite of his connections as a well known bar owner, my father's relative could not save us from this new displacement. It may be that he had grown sick of us — poor, helpless relatives — and decided to commend us to God's care.

We arrived somewhere at a large junction railroad station, where we were supposed to change trains. A cautious man, given the circumstances, my father would take the money he had on him and divide it among the four members of our family.

"Who knows what will happen?" he used to say. If by any chance we were unexpectedly separated, then each of us would have on him enough money to pull through. And that is exactly what happened at this railroad junction on the Hungarian plain.

"Wait here until I come back. I am going to see how things look," Father whispered his usual instructions. When he was late in returning, I asked my mother's permission to wander a bit through the station to shop for some trinkets. Of course, I did exactly the opposite of what my mother told me to do. By now, almost sixteen, I was big enough! What strange feelings I had! I began to reflect. Back to the railroad again? Then where to? And for how long? Go through want and misery again? And humiliation? I've got to make a break, right now. Freedom can't be gained by begging or weeping. One must win it by himself, with risks, and maybe with blood! Suddenly it dawned on me: For how long shall I be a burden to my family? . . . Then, without giving too much further thought to the complications which could arise with my departure, I lost myself. I got lost intentionally, gaping at the engines which whistled and then proceeded down some distant tracks. One train was carrying German soldiers. It

dawned upon me again that everywhere and always, the soldier has been the symbol of manhood, dignity, and freedom. This was my chance. On that distant track the soldiers were smoking and talking merrily near their railroad cars. The engine was taking water. I sneaked between the cars and began to talk to the soldiers, using a few sophisticated German phrases which I had picked up from literary texts in school. I found out that they were returning to Berlin from Romania. We discussed a few things about Romania. I told them where I came from and that I was fed up with everything. Then I said bluntly that I intended to become one of them . . . and that I also wanted to go to Berlin.

"I am not a Hungarian and I would like to get away from here. Please take me with you," I pleaded as warmly as I could. The soldiers laughed, joked, and asked me my age and many other things, insignificant to the interrogator but of crucial importance to the person under interrogation. Finally I realized that I was winning the sympathy of the older Feldwebel. Most likely he was won over by my youth and naivete. Of course — even now I remember well — when I looked at myself in the mirror, I saw a devil of a boy, clever, pleasant looking, with an oval face and soft skin, too young to have a beard but tall with broad shoulders . . . It's been a long time: I can see myself in that station whose name I cannot remember any more. I was not even sixteen years old and upset by too much thinking. I still have the faith, the audacity, and the heart I had then — in spite of the later circumstances where I had to fight with a knife between my teeth to defend myself, and even more often, to defend others. My heart is as warm as before, and I must declare that I never attacked another man for the sake of the attack. Today, as yesterday, I cannot forgive baseness, even if I have to pay for it with my head. Life conditioned me this way!

Moved by the good will shown me by the Feldwebel, the soldiers took me into their car, gave me a soldier's cap, coat, and equipment, turning me into a soldier. I crossed the Hungarian border in this way, and arrived at Vienna in Austria. For the first time I found myself somewhere in an unknown world, all by myself.

I had only one address, given me by the older Feldwebel. It was the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle in Vienna. As soon as I arrived there, I was directed to a military recruitment commission who, after finding me fit for "the military uniform," rejected me upon finding, from my own mouth, that I was not yet sixteen years old. Very politely they recommended that I wait another

two years, until I was seventeen. Until then, they said, I could find work somewhere in a shop, a factory, or in the countryside, where they needed strong hands for farm work. I came across a sergeant originally from the Romanian city of Sibiu, who showed me the easiest way out — a solution that had not crossed my mind: "If you want to kick the bucket," he said angrily, "change your birthdate. What! Do you think that in Germany one cannot lie or buy favors? Who the devil can lose out in this kind of deal, besides yourself?"

He gave me the name of the man who could provide what I wanted, and then walked away cursing. He was right! Another Feldwebel, whose name he had just given me, listened to me, scratched himself behind his floppy ears, and, without a word, made the alteration on my birth certificate. In return I gave him a box with a hundred Hungarian cigarettes (of the worst brand) and a bottle of "Negrita" rum which I happened to have on me. With the forged document in hand, I showed up at another commission, from where I emerged approved to serve in the infantry. In a few days I arrived at Rennes, France, for military training.

The training ended with maneuvers on the shore of the English channel, in the region of the famous Dieppe, exactly at the time of the British disembarkment there on August 19, 1942. My good fate allowed me to be only wounded during the fighting, and I was carried away, in a coma, in a Red Cross train just before a minefield exploded, destroying everything around it. A hand of one of the dead soldiers with a watch exactly like mine, got my name on the casualty list. It so happened that my unit knew the address of my Hungarian relatives in Budapest and sent them a brief notice: "Fallen for Germany on August 19, 1942."

Meanwhile I was lying unconscious in a military hospital in France. For this I was later awarded the medal for being wounded in action. At the same time, the colonel who had trusted me with the mission at Dieppe gave me the Iron Cross, class II. Shortly thereafter there came a letter from Budapest notifying the unit that had put me on the list of the dead, that there must have been an error because, as my mother wrote, "My son cannot be a soldier since he is under the age specified in the recruitment regulation books." My photograph was attached to the letter. Things got tangled pretty badly. Immediately after receiving the letter from Budapest, my unit also received the address of the hospital in Marnes-La Coquette near Paris, informing them that I was under their care and out of danger.

One day at the hospital I found myself face to face with my

immediate military superior, who, accompanied by the colonel, rightfully rebuked me for my lie and for the fake birth certificate. Then, asking me if I admitted to the lie, he showed me his evidence: my mother's letter and the photograph. However, he promised that he would do what needed to be done about my future. He would ask my superiors for a special dispensation. His request was not approved, but the unit did give me the Infanterie-Sturmabzeichen and dispatched me to the Schutz Korps der Organisation Todt, Normandy group, in Saint-Malo, and from there to Celle-Saint-Cloud, at the disposal of the S. K. Z. B. V. training school, where because of my athletic build I was assigned to the Special Instruction Corps.

When my training was finished, I took part in the Normandy campaign of 1944, in the battles against the Anglo-Polish-Canadian troops in September, 1944, in the battles in Holland, at Arnhem, and, finally, at the bridge-head in Tiel. From Tiel we were shipped towards the Eastern Front, towards Hungary. When we reached Koeln, we were ordered to change course back westward. We were routed through the Ardennes, Luxemburg, and Belgium. In these battles I was slightly wounded several times. In the last days of the war, during our forced retreat, I was once more wounded, this time quite badly in my left hand. In this critical state I was taken prisoner by the Americans, to a prisoners' camp in Ludwigshafen, at a brick factory on the Rhine. It was here, imprisoned and gravely wounded, that I learned of the end of the war and of the fall of the Third Reich. Hope was reborn, and happiness shone in every heart. However, for me the odyssey was just beginning. Who could guess what was coming?

I could have stayed on in France, mainly because I had always felt an unusual attraction towards France and the French. Fate had brought me as an enemy to France, a country I really loved. I was never a conqueror at heart, bent on the destruction of France. I can swear that few were the Germans who did not have respect and basic good will for the French and a sympathy for the misfortune of their country.

Thus the possibility of my remaining in France had come up, maybe because of the generally pro-French spirit in the world where I had spent my childhood. For me, as for every Romanian, regardless of his social rank, France was a kind of second homeland.

Here, in the France of my adolescent dreams, I met my first love, Jacqueline, to whom I became engaged. But Life, wicked as it is, wanted it differently. I did not remain in France. I am an

impulsive man, and a Puritan. I went through a terrible conflict between sentiment and duty, with the latter winning the upper hand. Or, perhaps it was my psychological nature not to let me be a scoundrel, in spite of the fact that I have no great virtues. I did not feel any guilt about my belonging to the German army. It would be a cowardly thing to desert it now, when black clouds were gathering in the blue sky of a Germany that had honored me with her citizenship when I was at a crossroads in my life. Maybe I was too naive, or too much of a conscientious soldier to understand that Germany had actually lost the war. Something of this sort was hard for an impetuous eighteen-year-old to comprehend. This sorry end to the war, through which I had just lived, depressed me deeply, as, I am sure, similar feelings took hold of all of Germany. But this depression brought about by the defeat of the soldier who lived in me was nothing compared to the shame I experienced when I went through the internment camp at Ludwigshafen where die Goldfasanen (the N. S. D. A. P. activists), dressed in their khaki uniforms decorated with gold embroidery, began chanting in unison, "Long live England!", "Long live the United States!", "Long live the Soviet Union!", "Long live Stalin!" Ashamed, I bowed my head and felt the earth spinning beneath me. Also ashamed were others, foot soldiers at Ludwigshafen, who also bowed their heads. But the earth did not split open to swallow us.

I was boiling with resentment. These "golden pheasants" were they not the same men I saw on the Ardennes front, in December, 1944, sending unfortunates lost from their units, to the political and military tribunals under the serious charge of treason and desertion? Their disorder and confusion in the face of a strong enemy advancing tempestuously toward them did not provoke the least understanding from these Cerberi behind the lines, who patrolled and controlled the roads. And today, they were right here in front of us, these "golden pheasants." Where, for God's sake, had the moral austerity, the patriotism, the "German dignity" gone? Where were the lessons, the "morals" they tried so often to ingrain in us? I remember how proud I stood when, in 1942, I was honored to guard the official tribune at Saint-Malo, when Doctor Ley came to inspect us and delivered a speech. And now the same I, confused as to what was good and bad in life, was standing, my head bowed in shame, receiving a new lesson from the same "golden pheasants" that had surrounded Doctor Ley. Ashamed and indignant, I saw, right there, something I had not even suspected to be possible. It was not

defeat. One can be dignified in defeat. What I saw was impudence, cowardice, and unleashed perfidy. It was the first cold shower of my life. For me, the "golden pheasants" had lost their multicolored plumage, and one could see their filthy rumps, their knavery. My youth now realized that it is extremely difficult for a barrel to remain a barrel when its hoops are gone. But sooner or later, the question arises: Do the hoops make the barrel?

I still cling to the old faith of Don Quixote de la Mancha, beliefs for which I unceasingly paid with blood, wounds, and personal bitterness; and now I blush at the insolence of those "golden pheasants" who sacrificed integrity and deserted to the powerful for the sake of their own well-being and advantage. I prefer the holy effusions of youth dedicated to beautiful ideas.

The unending stream of refugees from the communist "paradise" – sometimes entire Soviet families who preferred suicide to forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union

During the Ardennes offensive I stopped at several local houses, sometimes quartered there or sometimes just passing by. We were bluntly reminded that we had lost the war and that it would be better for us to speed our departure eastward since Soviet internment was preferable to American. I had heard the same tune over inside Germany. Only when the Soviet troops penetrated deeper and deeper into German territory and we started to meet the unending stream of refugees — sometimes entire Soviet families who preferred suicide to forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union — pouring out did we get the news of the Soviet type of "civilization and culture:" atrocities, thefts, debauchery, rapes, disgusting brutalities, and a great thirst for time devices, from wrist watches to cuckoo clocks. Soon we learned about the famous *davai cheas*. Personally I did not attach

much credit to these stories, considering them pure exaggerations by hotheads. I was also a soldier who had marched through many countries which had lost to the Germans without seeing one German soldier indulge in abuse of his vanquished enemy. Later, after having tasted the bitterness of life in the Soviet reeducation camps, I would have the opportunity to talk to and listen to Soviet soldiers also imprisoned with me, after their return from Central Europe, for reeducation, too. Their accounts told stories of such rapes, thefts, threats at gunpoint; of being tied up and roughed up, of raped women and girls, of highway robberies by armed bands . . . Even if half of it had been true, it would have been more than enough for me. This verified that what I had heard from the refugees were not horror stories to frighten children, or exaggerations. The beast of the East had been unleashed . . . Vae victis!

At the front I knew the American, the English, and the French soldiers as my adversaries. I was never on the Russian front. I did not know the Russian soldier. I did not sense how they were as enemies. I did not even know them as prisoners of war. Between myself and the Soviet Union as a state, there was no relationship whatsoever — neither sympathy or aversion. For the time being, I was wounded and a prisoner of the Americans.

THE BARREL

Years ago I came across an illustrated magazine with a few extensive reports about the war. Even today I can still recall some of the pictures and battle scenes from North Africa. One of the pictures stretching across two large pages represented a long, winding column of British and Australian prisoners of war — a group of frowning, ragged, and bearded men — with a caption: "And they embarked upon the long and hard road of captivity." That picture made me think, though it did not tell me much . . . Later on, however, it would come back to me and I would experience and understand the bitter meaning of the caption in a way that even the reporter could not have imagined . . . But I did not feel this at Ludwigshafen. I did not have the time to feel the first hardships of life as a prisoner of war, here at Ludwigshafen, because shame and indignation at the behavior of my former superiors did not give me a moment of respite to feel anything else. The hardships were to follow, at the hospital of prisoners at Heidelberg on the Neckar River.

I had been in prison before, in Hungary, but at that time I was there with my family, and at that time — at fifteen years of age — I took everything lightly. Now I was too mature. I was only nineteen years old, and I had just lost a war. That is, I had taken part in it and it was lost. A loss is a loss, and that means one must foot the bill! . . . Vae victis! . . . Meanwhile I was waiting and waiting! From one day to the next I was hoping things would straighten out. Suddenly, I was moved from the Ludwigshafen Camp to the hospital in Heidelberg, at Wilkenschule, to the surgical unit, for removal of bullet splinters from my left hand. This "gift" of the last days of the war turned sour. I was expecting the eventual loss of my arm. The oppressive, stale smell greatly contributed to my increasingly critical condition.

The barrel whose hoops encompassed me was not a barrel any more. Daily I witnessed quarrels and arguments which disgusted me and threw me off balance, sickened me. The gravity of the situation, want, and fears for the future and uncertainties cast a shadow over the minds of the men there, who a short time before had considered themselves masters of the world . . . A barrel is not a barrel any more when its hoops are gone . . .

As long as the barrel had steel belts, the staves in perfect alignment, it gave the illusion of a perfect whole. The Germans were Germans, and that was it! No irregularity, no diversity, no fission among the soldiers or the civilians. But here, at this hospital in Heidelberg, under American administration, even the most unperceptive of mortals could clearly see that the Germans ceased to be Germans. They were anything but Germans! Around me were only Bavarians, Saxons, Austrians, Pomeranians, Silesians, Sudetens. O, Saint Peter! They were a mighty and eloquent symbol of human weakness and wretchedness. Everybody was on the run. I was in a mad corridor where everyone was blindly trampling over everyone else . . . The ingratitude and cheapness of their accusations of each other filled me with disgust, in spite of the fact that I had never considered myself really a German. The lack of respect for the blood I and thousands of others had shed — regardless of the reasons why we had shed that blood — hurt me and aroused my rebellion. No one had the time to understand what loyalty meant. All the asses began to kick the dead lion . . .

I should like to point out here that regardless of all that had happened to me or to my family, I had always considered myself — as I will always consider myself — as ultimately belonging to the country where I was born — Romania.

I still think in my first language, Romanian. I still live with my

hills and the scenes of my childhood, which could not be other than Romanian, even if an officialdom had driven my father and the rest of our family out of that country as undesirable persons. But everywhere in the world, officials make mistakes. Why should Romanian officials be any different? Naturally the banishment affected me. But where was there any guilt in those hardworking, honest, hospitable common people whose big hearts, compassion for the miserable, and anger at injustice I had inherited. For these people, wherever I went — here or in the Arctic Circle — I would explode in an angry rebuff when anyone dared speak disrespectfully about my native land!

THE FORMER MERCENARY

Well, in a fallen Germany, I was just an ordinary mercenary. I had received some shocks before, but I did not pay attention to them. In the spring of 1945 I got an order to leave quickly for Balingen, near Sigmaringen in southern Germany. At that time, in the former castle of the Hohenzollerns, old Marshal Petain had taken residence. It was evening and I was off duty. Together with other soldiers I entered a cafe where there was a small group of girls dressed in Hitlerjugend uniforms. Of course, our youth prompted us to try whatever was permissible under the circumstances: start a conversation, invite them to dance, and then bring them to our table. But to everyone's surprise I got a cold, flat refusal. The ringleader of the group was very blunt in her refusal: A Reichsdeutsche like herself could not sit at the same table with an Auslaender, even if he did wear the uniform of the German soldier . . .

But cruel Fate arranged it so that after only a year's lapse, in the summer of 1946, after my release from the American prison camp, I should be working as an employee of the Victoria Hotel in Heidelberg. One evening I saw a young woman entering the room of a Black American officer. To my surprise I realized that the young coquette partner of the officer was one and the same ringleader of the Hitlerjugend group who just a year before at Balingen would not even bother to talk to an Auslaender!

Well, maybe it was natural for her not to remember me, but as she was leaving I could not resist reminding her — the female "golden pheasant" — of her phony puritanism.

"This is another situation now," grinned the present and former whore.

And the mercenary soldier in me was stunned and could only repeat her words: "This is the situation now," watching her seductive and impudent body movements.

As I had anticipated, in February, 1946, after my complete rehabilitation, the American administration at the Heidelberg hospital issued my release papers from the prison camp, and the military representative handed me the documents which made me a free man.

I was free again, and in good health. I had had only a few broken bones, always to be remembered.

In spite of the fact that the hospital was under American administration, the doctors and nurses, for the most part, were Germans. All patients were treated the same, with no discrimination whatsoever between the American wounded and the German wounded.

As far as I was concerned, it was to be expected that I should not get visits from anyone since I had no relatives in Germany. However, one day, in accordance with a good German custom, I, the loner, received a visit from a girl by the name of Anna. She looked very much like Jacqueline and, as I found out later, was born on the same day as Jacqueline. Anna's visits became more and more frequent and, as the days passed, what was bound to happen at that particular age, happened. Upon my release from the hospital, after an introductory conversation, an agreement was reached for me to live with Anna's family. Meanwhile the Labor Department assigned me to a job in an automobile repair shop with the United States Army Authority. I would like to mention that when I showed up for the job there were two limousines there which were great attractions: the personal limousines of Goering and von Ribbentrop.

The work in the repair shop was not easy. I was not qualified and I had to do things for which I had no training. What could I possibly have learned from the ages of fifteen to nineteen while my life was tossed from one whirlwind to another. I had been taught only one thing and I was taught that well: to take aim and shoot at people . . . It was war time.

THE SEVENTH ARMY AT THE HOTEL VICTORIA

Early in May, after I had taken the job at the repair shop, I met an acquaintance from the war by pure chance. As he told me over a glass of beer, he had a connection -- some minor

clerks — at the General Headquarters of the 7th Division of the American Army in Heidelberg, and could get me a better job at the hotel, now at the disposal of the American army. The hotel was the Victoria Hotel, where a few months later I would come across the young girl formerly from the Hitlerjugend, as I have mentioned earlier.

I would like to add that in this hotel there was an Information and Accommodation Desk for all United States officers passing through Heidelberg, but only officers from the rank of captain up could be quartered there. However, I noticed a few exceptions: some of the chiefs of the foreign military missions attached to the American army; a Captain Dietrich, representing the Hungarian Military Mission; two Polish majors who, strangely enough, bore identical surnames (Kaminski), one representing the government in Lvov (Lemberg) and the other the government in London. Even more strange was the fact that they took adjoining rooms, 212 and 214.

The author . . . while employed at the Victoria Hotel in Heidelberg

I witnessed many strange things at this hotel, things etched in my memory for good. The most mysterious was the occupant of Room 312, a master-sergeant of the American army, Johnny Woods from San Antonio, Texas. He was the only occupant of that room, and he was not even an officer. He had his own private automobile, and this was the only motor vehicle with a parking permit for the facility behind the hotel. Moreover, the official orders were that no one was allowed to enter Johnny Woods' room. Cleaning was permitted only in Woods' presence. One must also add that Master Sergeant Woods was a very good friend of the hotel's chief cook, who used to take Woods' meals upstairs in person, but only when Woods requested

it, which happened to be at the most unusual hours.

Woods never ate in the hotel dining room, and he seldom made an appearance in the hotel lobby. If he showed up — for whatever reason — he was usually dead drunk. Since Woods would automatically attract my special attention, I began to follow him out of curiosity, and I found out that almost all the time he locked himself in his room. He was of stocky build, a kind of stout, brawny Hercules, very morose and unfriendly. At first glance, even if one missed his reddish nose, he gave the impression of a dedicated drunkard. Soon enough I convinced myself of that fact when, one day, he emptied in one swig, a whole bottle of whiskey which Jimmy the cook had handed him. The only man he would tolerate and talk to was this cook, who, one may assume, knew a great deal about Woods and who himself did not talk to anyone else.

But one day, this friend of mine who had helped me get the job at the hotel, paid me a short visit and asked me to find out who Johnny Woods really was and what his business there was. I gathered from this that Woods was of interest to someone else. Of course, I did not suspect anything! Life had bathed me in all kinds of waters and I had learned a few things: for example, that golden pheasants (N. S. D. A. P. activists) were hypocrites.

Well, I promised my friend that I would pay more attention to these hotel occupants, but at the same time I was on guard with regard to the unknown intentions of this "helpful" person.

On the same floor with Johnny Woods was a cleaning maid, engaged to a young man by the name of Werner, originally from Silesia. I had befriended her during our daily encounters. While chewing the fat about the events of the day, I found out that both my friend Werner and his fiancee, the maid, had also been intrigued by the appearance and behavior of Sergeant Woods. I had a lengthy talk with them about this odd tenant, and in the end Werner's fiancee made up her mind to prove her skills and circumvent official regulations. Watching Woods regularly, she took advantage of a moment when she guessed there would be a prolonged absence (he had been called to the telephone and had left in his automobile); with an identical key (not an insoluble problem at these hotels, thank God), she opened Woods' door and entered the room.

On the table there was a package containing some photographs of Woods at different periods in his life. In some he was obviously a professional man. In a box under the table were two hoods of black fabric, hoods used at hangings; one of them was still stained

with blood. Some of the photographs were of hangings. This told me everything. I understood very clearly that Johnny Woods was the official hangman of the American army, something I had not known so far. Thus was I introduced into the secrets of American democracy. Amused and wise, my friend laughed in my face and with a superior air said, "I suspected it, but I needed proof."

All this happened while the Nuremberg trial was just starting. The trial was the subject of conversation among several groups of American officers every evening in the hotel lobby. They passed along news to each other or would bet, over a glass of whiskey, sometimes hanging around until after midnight. I understood these were mostly F. B. I. agents who were there expressly to attend the trial of the war criminals.

Hotel Victoria
Johnny Woods' room is on the fourth floor

On October 1, 1946, the day that sentence was passed in the Nuremberg trial, I was again looked up by the previously mentioned friend, this time accompanied by an individual unknown to me. He encouraged me to do whatever I could to watch Johnny Woods closely. He insisted that I should not miss Woods' eventual preparations to leave, and that I report his departure, which seemed imminent. In case I should notice anything, I was to call him immediately at a number which he left with me on a piece of paper.

"It is more than certain that Woods will have to go to Nuremberg. We are convinced that he is the man who will carry out the sentences of the Nuremberg trial," he told me. "We count on your information." Then he left.

That evening, when nobody in the street knew anything about what was going on, and the same evening on which the Third Reich's Hermann Goering committed suicide, I was on duty at the hotel. A telephone call through the hotel intercom asked for Johnny Woods. But Woods was nowhere to be found. I went to look for him in his room, but he was not there. I sent word to Werner, the Silesian, to get in touch with the kitchen by telephone. I knew for sure that the sergeant had not left the hotel in the past few days. I found out that he was not in the hotel either. Finally I found him in the small building behind the hotel, talking with Jimmy, the cook, both leaning against the automobile. As usual, Woods was drunk.

I told him that he had an urgent call at the hotel switchboard. He swore but did not go to the switchboard. Instead he went to the telephone in the kitchen office. Through the door, which was left open, I watched him closely. His face changed abruptly as he gave harsh, short, soldierly answers: "Yes, sir!"

He hung up, swore a few times, then, after grumbling a few words to Jimmy, he ran to the elevator. There he stopped short, turned towards me and said, "Please, get someone to give me a hand!"

"I don't have anybody, but I can help you myself, Mr. Sergeant," I said.

He left me in the door of Room 312, entered the room alone and then returned carrying a few coils wrapped in cloth. I took the coils and slid my arm through them. On our way, pulling aside one of the edges of the cloth,

Johnny Woods

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which was slightly torn, I saw that these were coils of a creamy white rope, very soft, as thick as one's little finger. For me this was plain enough. The rope coils that I was carrying were the professional tools of Master Sergeant Woods. There were plenty of coils, perhaps too many. Were the American suppliers taking into account the whole of Europe?

I accompanied Woods to his automobile, which, as I recalled, was parked in the little backyard of the hotel. He took the coils in his arms, put them on the seat beside him, and thanked me. I left. By the time he was gone I had called the number which had been given to me.

This was the moment my friend had been waiting for. He was pleased to get the news while Woods was still warming up his engine.

What happened afterwards I do not know, but I later found out from the same officers who used to congregate in the lobby that our odd hotel guest did reach Nuremberg and that on the morning of the second day afterwards, he was brought back to Heidelberg but not to our hotel, rather, to the Schrieder Hotel, somewhere near the railway station. Under heavy escort he was taken to the Frankfurt am Main airport and spirited back to the United States.

From the gossips, after some glasses of whiskey, I also found out that Woods had almost caused three or four accidents, but intoxication, they said, or luck or stupidity saved him every time. One of the automobiles which almost collided with Woods' car skidded off the highway and was completely demolished; its occupants were killed, burned to death.

The next day, in a very discreet and correct manner, all the employees of the hotel were asked repeatedly, by different persons, if they had noticed anything unusual the evening before Johnny Woods had left, if anybody had visited him; what unknown persons had called at the hotel; if he had spoken with anyone . . . Of course, everybody saw nothing and knew nothing. And that was all . . . Why did they insist on so much? What can I say? Politics is strange.

It seems that the story of Master Sergeant Woods would end here. It seems that way, only . . . I heard afterwards that the final end of the story came somewhere else, in the Pacific, in the islands of Hawaii, where, they said, one day Woods was found stabbed to death in the back, nobody knew by whom. Did he know too much? Did he taste the forbidden fruit? Let us not pretend to be more knowing than the newspapermen and

the policemen. His dismal end befitted his dismal past.

After this, the atmosphere at the Victoria Hotel deteriorated. The discreet but innovative questions, more and more frequent, by different intruders into the hotel, smelling strongly of the F. B. I. and C. I. A., did not augur a rosy future. Personally I was fed up with minefields and broken legs. Maybe it was not just the Victoria Hotel but the whole of Heidelberg that had become stale. Nothing was left of the romantic atmosphere of the student songs or the carousals in Auer's Tavern. On the contrary, there was an undercurrent of fear that shook you when they talked a great deal about a certain underground organization called "Edelweiss Piraten," led supposedly by Commander Wehrwolf and organized by the brazen Martin Bormann and an Oberfuehrer of the S. S. from Luneburger-Heide. There was talk of plots and conspirators. Of the F. B. I. working hard. The Military Police (who had replaced the Gestapo) were sweating. What was going on? I did not know, but I did know that many young people wearing certain kinds of colored scarfs were being stopped by the Military Police and loaded into trucks. Some were freed, but their scarfs were taken from them. Each case was handled differently, and things changed from day to day. I did not have anything to do with these youths. I did not know what was true and what was not true about them. Perhaps the Military Police and the F. B. I. were not sure either, but the atmosphere was tense. I remained a simple Auslaender, a former mercenary.

In such an atmosphere and under such circumstances, an offer by the head of the French Military Mission — Major Fletcher — was more than welcome. It was an offer to work as a translator at the French gendarmerie in Mainz. I rejoiced in my heart and accepted without hesitation. I accepted in a great hurry but without showing much enthusiasm.

But let us hang around a little longer at the Victoria Hotel in Heidelberg, to relate a brief story with a short chain of events.

As I mentioned earlier, there was a luxurious restaurant at the hotel. One morning three Russian officers arrived. They were members of the Soviet Military Mission, which was quartered at the Hotel Schrieder, near the railway station, the same hotel where Woods rested after his adventures in Nuremberg. It was also the hotel that accommodated the Yugoslav Mission.

The three Soviet officers came to eat breakfast here, but the rooms were overcrowded. Waiting lines were already formed at the tables. By chance, at one table there were three empty chairs, the fourth occupied by a lady wearing the uniform of a major in a

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radar unit of the American army.

The waiter, whom I knew as a native of Breslau, who was always courteous to newcomers, spoke to the lady major, asking her permission to seat the three Soviets at her table. They were introduced to the lady, bowed their heads in polite greeting, sat at the table, and ordered, after a brief conference among them, two boiled eggs for each. The lady ate some cereal which had chocolate on it. After looking around at the other tables where boiled eggs had also been served, one of the Russian newcomers took a knife and tried to cut off the top of the egg as he saw the Americans doing. Unused to this technique and cutting off the top of the egg with an awkward movement of the hand in the wrong direction, he managed to make the egg slip off its dish into the cereal of his neighbor, the lady major. As it plunged into the cereal, it splashed her face and her beautiful uniform.

Hotel Schrieder
The Soviet Military Mission was quartered here

As one would expect, this awkward incident stirred an uproar of laughter. The Americans, who were all eyes and ears and always ready to enjoy a prank, began to jump up and down in their chairs, laughing merrily. The dining room was a storm of laughter. The miserable culprit offered his apologies, one after another, but as one awkward move leads to another even more awkward than the first, so he had the unfortunate idea to pull out of his trousers pocket an interminably long kerchief, presumably a handkerchief, which was all crumpled and in poor condition. Then he began to wipe off the lady's uniform, smearing it with chocolate. The gesture seemed childish, but everyone laughed to tears, like children amused at clowns.

As long as I stayed at the Victoria, I never saw any further trace of these Russians. For the Americans, the whole episode was reported over and over, an opportunity for amusement for two whole weeks. As for the lady major, who was an intimate friend of Mrs. Filipini, wife of the lieutenant from the Italian Mission, she became the center of general attention. People gathered around her and asked her to tell them again about the episode with the egg and the chocolate until the whole story became as commonplace as a popular song.

THE FRENCH ARMY AT MAINZ

While I was discussing with Major Fletcher my future job as an interpreter of French at Mainz, some misunderstandings with Anna and her parents arose. My misunderstanding with Anna did not require much explanation. She was pregnant. Maybe I could not explain much to her, even if I had wanted to, because in fact there was really nothing to be explained.

I knew I had to leave Heidelberg. I felt it was the right thing to do, although I could not put my reasons into words. I insisted that Anna come with me, but my words fell on deaf ears. Neither Anna nor her parents understood me. I should add that her parents understood me less than she did. So I had to go into the world again, all by myself.

Nevertheless I kept in touch with them by letters, and I found out from them that Anna gave me a child, whom, by the same Fate that had ruled my life so far, I saw for the first time when he was twenty-four years old. The child was named Roland. When Roland was born, I was four years younger than my father when my mother gave birth to me.

In the last letter that Anna received from me, I told her that I had some vague news about my parents, whom I had deserted in a railway station in Hungary, and that I was going to seek them out. After finding them, I told her I would return to take her with me to find a home. There comes a time when drifting must stop. Even the wind, the wandering wind, quiets down . . . But again Fate decided otherwise.

The French gendarmerie had caught a suspect who did not have any papers and with whom they could not communicate

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by any means. Newly hired by them, I was called in to perform my task as interpreter.

How life avenges itself on one! This turn of events was very strange! The suspect in question was a Hungarian citizen. And here was I, the same person who had detested Hungarians and only reluctantly learned their language when he was a fifteen-year-old, now acting — all of a sudden — as an interpreter from Hungarian into French. The man before us was working in Germany and after being set free, he had been imprisoned by the Russians in the former infamous Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald. Considered a suspect, after the Russian way of thinking which is hard to understand, he had been placed in one of the shipments of specialists to the U. S. S. R. He had managed to escape and for one year had been shifting back and forth between the British and American zones without being able to make a living. As he told us, he had finally plucked up enough courage to cross over into the French zone because he had heard that the city of Landau had a center for the French Foreign Legion, which he intended to join, with other men who could not settle down.

"Because among people who settle down -- the so-called good people — one doesn't have the slightest chance of making a living," he concluded with sadness.

I told the story of this wanderer to the French gendarmes who, without formalities (you see, they did not suffer from the Russian inferiority complex or the communist nervous suspicion), solved his problem in the twinkling of an eye.

"Well, if that's the case, take him to Landau and make him happy! Let him have his way!" So the gendarmes told me. Then they gave him the necessary papers, and I left for Landau with the Hungarian.

As far as I was concerned, I was happy with my assignment, because I had some acquaintances in Landau, whom I wished to see. I took to the road without any hesitation. On the way we talked about this and that, and we found ourselves talking about Hungary — Budapest, the beautiful city on the Danube, in particular. I told him a few things about myself, and when he heard my name he paused for a moment, then said, "Wait a minute! I think I have heard that name before. It is the name of someone from Romania whom I met a year ago. He was in the same prisoners' camp with me . . . a man with his wife and their little girl. He had the same name as yours. The Russians put them on the same train with me, but I ran away; I had quickly realized what Russian freedom meant."

From his description I recognized my father, my mother, and my little sister. But it had been a whole year since then. And how many things can happen in a year!

According to his story, the Soviets had put them in a camp from which, together with other families, they were destined for reconstruction work in the U. S. S. R. But on the way the little girl had an accident with her leg, and the Russians had to leave them somewhere in a camp hospital, in a small town whose name the Hungarian could not recall. This is all I could find out from him.

"It could have been somewhere in Czechoslovakia, or, maybe, at Frankfurt an der Oder," he tried to remember. "I know that shortly after I met them, I managed to run away. Since then a year has passed . . . Maybe more than a year. And I am still on the run without having accomplished anything in this world."

From this unusual accident of circumstance I learned a lot. Was it not the same inscrutable Fate which had taken me from Heidelberg and made me quarrel with Anna and her folks? Strange forces, strange coincidences!!

Back in Landau I was given a pass by Lieutenant Jacques, my boss in Mainz, and I was soon on my way to Frankfurt an der Oder. I had plenty of money. I had made quite a bit at the Victoria Hotel, and the French had paid me well. But it was not a question of money but what to do with it. As the saying goes, "Money is not worth a dime!" At that time there was no food, no medicine. You could seldom find any clothing, not even the necessities of life. I had managed to get some strong currency, and supplied myself with food, cigarettes, and some other things which eventually would get me anything without too much argument — tender more useful to me than American dollars, British pounds, or German marks. The black market and drugs were commonplace. I had no choice but to use them. Otherwise no one would have paid any attention to me.

Loaded with the above mentioned tender, I arrived at Frankfurt an der Oder, and, after looking around, checked out what my Hungarian informant had told me. Indeed, he had not lied to me, but I had to investigate further, and further. Since I realized it was too risky for me to tackle the Soviets in their zone right away, I returned to the British, American, and French zone in Mainz. As soon as I got back, I managed to get some forged documents, including an exact replica of an identity card from the Soviet zone. Had I dared to use such documents from the West (as I knew from the experience of others), I would have been

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arrested immediately. As our sources of information told us, the Soviets looked upon Westerners with suspicion. Anyone coming from the West, no matter what his identity papers said, was immediately labeled as nothing but an American spy. I do not know that it was a real Russian fear of American intelligence. I am rather inclined to believe that it was a Soviet ploy to justify any arrests by them in retaliation for any Western accusations of Soviet espionage. This Soviet counterblow against "espionage" would shut the mouth of anyone with a bee in his bonnet.

Armed with my forged papers, I continued to look for my parents, thinking I was well protected. Crossing the borders between the four zones of a divided Germany was not too difficult a task if one had a little cunning and boldness, especially from and into the zones under the Western Powers. But the Russians were more vigilant. It is true that we were wading in troubled waters, and people wandered like bewildered sheep when they are goaded into circles that grow smaller and smaller as the dogs are set on them by a master prodding them into a field to be milked. Everyone seemed to have lost something and was looking for it. And sometimes one can be looking for something without having lost anything! Uncertainty and general disorder, constant turmoil! People's lives were being absorbed by the tiny necessities! No one could see beyond the immediate or the recent past. We kept going around in circles like the tiger in Rilke's verses, until we reached a kind of madness. Nobody was spared. The political leaders were like sheep. Maybe the whole postwar world was in a state of collective dementia, perhaps because of the lack of vision among its leaders. Some of them stood powerless, groping in their calculations, confused by their doubts. Others had their minds clouded and drowned in the golden sea of their dividends.

Whimsically it seemed to me that if a lion should appear in these times he would have had to live under the rule of the sheep. And the only lion around then was General Charles de Gaulle. They talk a lot about the lions of those times, but I should like to point out that the exaggerated "democracy" of some of these leaders and the blind centralism of others — the result of too many personal preoccupations by some of these leaders and the overvaluing of trifles by others — immured them all in a kind of paralysis, proving in the end that their vision was even more limited than that of the sheep. Their heads were more buried in the sand than an ostrich's. They were more pitiable than the jackal. We, the huddled masses, groped in our bewilderment in a world

created by them. This is in essence the chronicle of the years after 1945 as seen by one of the multitude, a chronicle which denies the praises and dithyrambs sung by the "lions" in their international tribunals, flattering each other so as to deceive the masses.

This chronicle refutes the hired scribblers — great or small — who shamelessly have filled up the pages of illustrated magazines and gazettes with their hollow words, displayed like the tails of peacocks.

I do not want to mention names. They are too sacrosanct. But the sounding of those names is hollow enough for me, and it stirs my disgust. The bearers of those names could just as well have been paraded at the Nuremberg trial. As Garibaldi said: The difference between the condottiere who stood up against the wall to be shot, and the laurel-crowned hero consists only in who is the victor. Victory wields momentarily the power of the dagger.

Later, the resounding words and the blare of trumpets could still drown out crimes and general grief. I heard with my own ears and saw with my own eyes the Soviet brass bands playing joyful marches and spirited mazurkas at the gates of Soviet concentration camps to distract attention from the shame of those camps, to distract attention from the cries of those being whipped inside in the reeducation cells, to distract attention from the forced labor of the convoys of slaves streaming in, in a winding column of ulcerated and shabby but still living corpses, winding towards the mines north of the Arctic Circle.

But let us suppress our feelings at this moment. A chronicler should limit himself to telling the story in a calm and restrained manner. This is the custom nowadays. Zeal and massive facts are not interesting and have nothing to do with truth. Only abstractions and utopias are persuasive. Only in fairy tales is the word powerful . . . Yet Herodotus indulged in pathos and deep feelings when he told of Halicarnassus, the land of the ancient Amazons, and his own native country. And Jules Michelet and Carlyle, as well as the ancient Roman chroniclers, and the learned Vasile Parvan gave way to passion and were carried away on the wings of poetry while writing authentic history.

"The abstraction, the idea becomes a force only when embraced by the masses," we have been told by the most tyrannical of the militants of the materialist-dialectic philosophy in whose name so many have been tied to the stake when they rejected the primacy of matter over spirit. The exaggerated rationalism borrowed from Hegel and professed by the leaders of dialectic materialism — a rationalism which they "idealized" in spite of their professed

antagonism toward "idealism" — has proved to be the weak spot in their theory, which they consider, even today, as supreme and universally applicable in spite of the monstrosities born out of its practical applications.

Therefore, let us look at the contradictions of dialectic logic, which can ascertain everything, demonstrate everything even better than the Greek sophists. Let us look at this Trojan horse which the materialistic dialecticians, without being themselves Nestors — brought into the very heart of our city. Let us show these people their logical errors in applying their own pragmatic philosophy, which has been proved a practical failure, with its fraudulent bankruptcy engulfing the economy, sciences, morals, and politics of one of the vastest states on this globe — an immense cage for multinational guinea pigs in Eastern Europe.

For these reasons, our chronicle can only be heated and sorrowful. It cannot be otherwise, and if, from time to time, it theorizes or seems dull or cold, this is due to the fact that when one is facing his adversary, he cannot talk to him other than by borrowing his weapons as well as his words. Pasteur proved that you cannot get rid of rabies without getting a small dose of the disease itself, through inoculation. In the words of the Romanian peasant living on the banks of the Danube: "To drive out a nail, use another nail."

THE SOVIET ZONE

As I said before, I had left for Frankfurt an der Oder equipped only with whatever I absolutely needed, but I could not find out anything.

However, on my way back, somewhere near the Czechoslovakian-East German border, near Chemnitz, in the township of Lauter, at the Schwan Inn, I met a girl. Her name was Erika Ott. After listening to my story, she promised to strive to do whatever she could to find a trace of my parents and to let me know in case she did find something. Meanwhile my currency, consisting of cigarettes, food, drink, and different trinkets for ladies, was gone; and I had to return to my base of departure.

In April, 1947, I received a telegram from Erika. She had some news, so I took to the road again. The frontier was not strictly guarded, and, without too many difficulties, I crossed it at Eisenach with a whole group of men and women. On the road we were joined by a girl, Thea Meckel, who had crossed from

the British zone — where she had been visiting an aunt — into the Soviet zone, where her mother and father, a former Nazi clerk now in a camp for political prisoners in the Soviet zone, lived. From what she told us while we were on the road, she had joined us because she was afraid to take the trip alone.

She knew that at these crosspoints there was a large black market going on, with goods from the West, and that very often there were robberies. The perpetrators of these crimes were not only nototorious thieves but also border guards. Under the circumstances, Thea, learning that I was going to cross back, asked me to wait for her upon my return, so that we could walk the route together. So that we could be sure to meet, I gave young Thea, Erika's address in Lauter, where I had to go to get the news she had for me.

The Soviet occupation zone in Germany (also called the German Democratic Republic)

It was April 13, 1947. I did not find Erika at home, and so, since I had to go somewhere to rest, I entered a kind of cross-roads inn. I had hardly finished washing myself and swallowing some food when a few Soviet officers appeared at the inn.

By the air of importance which they assumed, I smelt a mission patrol or a raiding patrol. "Your papers! Everyone stand up!" said one of the Soviet officers.

I felt my heart in my boots, but I strived to remain calm. My papers were in order, after all! Then they took my papers, examined them inside out, then looked at me and then again at my papers. Something intrigued them. As I quickly found out — and it was repeated to me over and over — their bewilderment was simple and justified. What was I doing there? The truth was that I had shot myself in the foot. I did not know and Erika had failed to warn me, that I was seven kilometers inside the forbidden zone, a secret zone of uranium mines which the Soviets were exploiting.

I repeat: The date was April, 1947.

FIVE MINUTES

Without further comment, the patrol commanding officer politely invited me to accompany him to headquarters. In his words, it was a simple formality which would last at most five minutes, and I was very happy to hear that. "A statement, a simple statement," he emphasized, again, in order to allay my doubts.

Well, those five minutes lasted from April 19, 1947, until December 1, 1955, that is to say, eight years and eight months, or approximately 104 months, or 3,149 days and 3,149 nights. I should add that when I was arrested by the Soviets I was almost twenty-one years old, and when I returned to the place of my childhood, later on, I was almost thirty years old. This meant that my adolescence and part of my teenage years were gone with the wind. That much time was the price of a five-minute "formality," a five-minute statement. Afterwards I heard this as a kind of refrain, thousands and thousands of times, from thousands of mouths, since this was what also happened to others.

After my statement, there came interrogation after interrogation. They compiled a file on me, and through the "usual procedure" (Soviet "usual procedure"), I was sentenced. It is worth remarking that at the interrogation, to my astonishment, I was confronted with Thea, who had been followed step by step by

the Soviets after she went to Lauter. From a conversation (stealthy, of course) with Thea, I found out that she had stopped also at the crossroads inn but could not tell me what news Erika had for me.

The only message brought to me at this place was one to bless me with a nine-year voyage through the U. S. S. R. without a passport, a voyage which would include an itinerary with one of the most pleasant of Soviet surprises: a stopover beyond the Arctic Circle, for which I am heartily thankful. To be able to make such a trip without carrying a passport, without having to beg for transfers or currency, without responsibilities, is certainly an opportunity one cannot dismiss lightly. Life is given only once, and one must live it fully, taking risks through times of distress and turbulence. I am also thankful to the Soviets for something else — the most complete and diverse education I could ever get in my life. The sages, gathered all into one place, from the birth of this world down to the present day, could not have provided more of an education. Since then I never saw Erika again, but I did meet Thea several times. I tried in vain to explain to her and to make her understand what had happened. But she remained convinced that I had betrayed her. I guessed that the Soviet interrogators were great masters at this kind of misrepresentation. In the end, I think she convinced herself that she had been followed after she had stopped over at the inn and that her arrest was made only after the K. G. B. were sure there was no one else to be caught in their trap.

I was to meet Thea again, after Dresden-Radebeul (at that time turned into a prison and K. G. B. center by the Soviets), at Potsdam, in Nonnenkloster. For just crossing from the British zone into the Soviet one, in order to help her sick mother (the K. G. B. officers knew this very well) Thea Meckel was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment under the charges that she had spied for the Americans. The trial was a mock one and took place at Potsdam-Berlin.

Even to this day I can see one of the prosecutors (I have no idea where they got him) who kept snoring, his head falling from side to side. Neither Thea nor I had the right to an attorney. They did not even bother to supply us with one of their own attorneys. They felt so strong at this time. Even in their files on the formally dead, the Soviets were trampling upon the most elementary notions of justice, a disregard to which they perfidiously resorted in order to cover up their responsibility for the tragic fate of millions of people. And they have succeeded

until now. "They outsmart the devil, sir." "This is what I call diplomacy." "Highly schooled, my friend." "They tricked Roosevelt." "Churchill, that weather-cock, has a lot to learn." These were comments I remember from those philistines who waxed ecstatic when presented with such perfidy.

I feel very sorry that this benighted West did not know the stamp of the Soviet boot on its back . . . for nothing else than to satiate itself with these flirtations with abstractions. It would be a truly interesting experiment to see how the mind of the West would work once it has been tossed into this pigsty, as it happened with the bourgeois pro-Slavonic aristocracy when they were deported to Siberia — interesting if for nothing else than to see them sated with the Soviets' undigestible ideas and with smiling policy. If these Soviet savages had succeeded in crossing over the English channel, we would see Sir Winston Churchill trimmed down to eighty pounds and the philosopher Bertrand Russell dressed in padded trousers and jacket and lumberman's boots, in line for his *kasha* of bran, his spoon stuck in his boot-leg, nonetheless shouting loudly that this is the key to happiness.

Only in this way could one have understood what kind of fungus is peaceful coexistence, the "noninterference in others' internal affairs," the leaving of others to their own fate, the "friendly help" to the Soviets, the "democracy" and "humanism" of these societies in which there is no "exploitation of man by man," the "withering of the state as an instrument of mass oppression," etc., etc. — all the rigmarole mouthed by the Russian organ grinder. What a pity! Yes! What a pity that the West did not have the opportunity to taste such happiness! What a pity that there are no brass bands in the West to drown out the cries of despair behind facades.

THEA MECKEL

Thus Thea Meckel was "awarded" a twenty-year sentence. And, as if that were not enough, or perhaps because the judges expected some thanks, one of the judges (I remember this well) asked Thea (a question as stupid as the judge himself) whether she liked or hated the Soviets. Thea's answer was frank and blunt and gave me great comfort.

"I do not think," she said, "that there is even one among those who passed through your hands who would not despise you and hate you. As far as I am concerned, I felt strongly about

you when you came to Germany; and I am convinced, as we look at each other now, that nobody will ever forget you. You sentenced me to twenty years for spying in spite of the fact that you know very well that I am innocent of your accusations and that you have no proof of them. You know very well that my mother has been sick and that my aunt lives in the English sector. Since you did not give me permission to see my mother, I took the liberty of seeing her myself. I came from a Germany under the English to the same Germany but under the Soviets, in order to help my mother because my father, whom you keep in prison without trial, cannot help her. You accused me of spying but I did not spy, and now I am sorry that I didn't. I should have done it. You just gave me the idea. How can I like you when you torture us with want and fear? My father was a simple man. He was a member of the Nazi Party, a Hitlerite, just as you are communists. Well, he is guilty of that, but your turn may come some time. Things change . . . as the wind blows. Did you search out anything else about my father? Did you try to find out what he did? How he behaved? Why have you kept him in prison for so long without sentencing him if he is guilty of anything? Right now I don't even know where you have taken him! How can you ask me if I like you? Do you think that I can forget your rapes when you entered our village? Do you think that there is anyone in our village who could forget what you have done?"

"Was the accused raped?" the prosecutor interrupted.

"Not me . . . because my mother hid me and they could not find me. Had it been otherwise, you would have proceeded with the rape, maybe even you who sentence me and now ask me these questions."

The truth is that I had known very little about this girl whom I now saw talking and, a prosecutor in her own right, making her own accusations of those who sentenced her to twenty years in prison. I had barely known anything about her. The courage with which she confronted her judges impressed me. We happened to cross the border together between the two Germanies, and we happened to stop over at a crossroads inn, where we were both arrested. Her answers stunned me. I was a stubborn person myself, but she lent me her strength, and I thank her in the name of what represents the true Germany. This bobby-soxer! Where might she be now? I still cherish her at the bottom of my heart! Thea was a really straightforward person! Her answers and her barbs definitely washed away the shame of the golden pheasants among the German people.

Are there many more German girls like Thea?

The story of this girl, who for a short period crossed my path, has a very important lesson. Maybe that twenty-year sentence, given with such "magnanimity," was only the beginning of her story . . . Who could have foreseen the rest of her odyssey? What concentration camps poisoned her existence? In what mine or brick factory did she waste her youth and her health, reconstructing the society of the "new order" ? But for me the end of her story was the trial of which I was a part, and which was not really her trial but the trial of her judges and prosecutor — representatives of the "most humane" way of living.

THE INTERROGATOR OF LAUTER

With a heavy heart I left Thea's path to follow my own. Arrested at the inn where I wanted to take a rest, I was transported to Lauter, into a villa that had been taken over by the K. G. B., in order for me to make a simple statement. There, instead of making that statement I was submitted to a thorough search "a la russe." I was stripped to the skin, everything was taken from me, and I was pushed into a cellar. Since there was no one to see them, the policemen — often amiable but actuated by circumstances — these "heroes" of the new human civilization, turned into devils. As soon as you are taken into the darkness of their custody, human rights disappear, and without any further explanation, you find yourself in a dungeon.

After half an hour, or maybe an hour (they snatched my watch at the first opportunity), I was taken upstairs, into a room where I saw the same K. G. B. captain who had arrested me. He started the interrogation surprisingly fast. I had heard that sometimes they let you rot for weeks without anybody asking you anything, in order to make you depressed and to kill your spirit. Subtle inconsistency! Were they up to some surprise tactic to destroy my spirit? Was I so much more interesting, or did the bored cat feel like playing with me?

The interrogator kept smoking and looking at me silently. I also looked back at him. There was a heavy silence. We each maintained our silence and kept staring at each other. I do not recall if anything passed through my mind. I was confused, like a camera focused on infinity but actually snapping an object in the foreground.

What was the interrogator thinking? I did not know, but I felt

that his silence was beginning to get on his nerves. I was looking at him straight in the eye, serenely. His face began to show signs of an inner discomfort . . . As if we were at a death watch for a common acquaintance . . .

We continued this silence. I began to realize that neither of us was thinking about anything. We were just watching something in common, maybe mankind! Maybe we were looking at humanity. Or maybe at the nothingness in both of us!

Suddenly we both started. Someone had just come in. We realized it was the interpreter. He looked bored. His voice seemed to convey all that Slavic sadness. Inside my heart I sensed the shades of meaning in his questions. The interpreter began to ask, "Who are you? Where did you come from? How did you get here? What are you looking for?"

I answered. The interrogator listened to me, looked at the interpreter, and said tersely, "You cannot fool me! You are lying!"

Then he asked the same set of questions in the same bored voice. I repeated my answers, and again he said, nodding in disgust, "You are lying!"

Then he added: "You are a spy. You spy for the Americans. That is your real story."

This scene was repeated over and over, exactly in the same manner, until we came to some brief monosyllabic questions and a shaking of the head.

He kept asking, "Well, how are we doing?" and I kept denying his accusations, shaking my head. Strange interrogation! Bizarre style! What kind of a man was this fellow? What was this bemused fellow looking for? I fell silent again. All three of us were now silent. The interrogator did not have the inclination to pursue the matter any further. Maybe I could not stir any interest from him. He got up slowly from the table and went to the door. I watched him. He stopped and, pointing a tired hand at me, said to the interpreter, "Tell him it's all the same to us! Confess or not, spy or no spy, it's all the same! Lie or no lie, tell him that he will be judged as a spy, an American spy. And that's all for today."

I was taken again to the cellar, where I was left a few days without being questioned further. Never again did I see that strange captain.

Finally they did me the "favor" of taking me to another interrogation. Another captain was waiting for me. In his hand he was holding my identity card, which he kept turning from side to side.

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It seemed, however, to be in order: All the stamps and all the seals required in the Soviet zone were there. (I forgot to mention that I had managed to get a zone ID card issued in the Soviet zone.)

What my interrogator did not know and what I knew very well was that my Soviet ID card was forged — in the British zone — by some expert forgers in Hanover, whose headquarters were in the bunker at the main railway station. At that time Hanover was on the crossroads between Copenhagen, Hamburg, and Berlin, and on the way to the Soviet zone. It was the Black Market of the West, the paradise of crooked businessmen trading in anything and facilitating transit for everything.

Merchandise or people, people or merchandise . . . It was here that all the refugees came; it was here where you could find all the shipwrecked, all the deserters from the Soviet army. From what I had found out from them, only the most daring Russians ventured here. I had learned that many more wanted to desert but at the political education sessions, their political officers frightened them with the news that the United States and England — as provided by a mutual agreement with the U. S. S. R. — would turn in all deserters. This kind of scare tactics worked. How could the Soviet soldiers have found out anything else about the policies of the bourgeois capitalists? Therefore only those with acquaintances among the German civilians in the Soviet zone — whom they began to trust and whose help they resorted to — only these would desert. As I have mentioned, my Soviet ID card was fashioned at this center, and I had been given all assurances that it could not be distinguished from an authentic one. According to this forged ID card, I had been born in Weimar, in the same town where Goethe was born, and I lived at 25 Bahnhofstrasse. The only serious mistake by the forgers was the name of this street. This was an irony of Fate, since Weimar must have been the only town in the whole of Germany which did not have a Bahnhofstrasse, although it does have a railway station. But the K. G. B. did not notice this gross mistake, and thus the reputation of Hanover remained untouched.

I should like to remind my reader that in this black market hideout, which will someday become a historic landmark, the transactions ranged from cigarettes and food coupons to firearms, from forged certificates and ID cards to forged passports to any place in the world. Here, at "Hanoverbar," at the railway station, there gathered all the experts in forgery from all over the world, and their activity was in full swing. Every "work" was paid for in

strong currency — United States dollars, British pounds, Swiss francs, jewelry, gold; or in kind — food, clothing, alcohol, cigarettes, perfumes, or feminine favors.

I knew this much while the Soviets did not. But what did they know that I did not? I did not know that they had been waiting for me to fall into their trap. They had intercepted the telegrams sent by Erika Ott to me at Mainz in the French zone. Moreover, through their agents in Mainz they had checked the address on the telegram — 9 Alice Street — and knew that on that street there was the hotel in which the headquarters of the French Red Cross was stationed. This intrigued the Soviets even more and persuaded them to follow me. They obviously had precise information about me and were waiting for me to arrive at Lauter to take me unawares. Their first conclusion was that my papers were fake and that I was a suspect. As far as the story about my parents was concerned, it was considered simple cock-and-bull by a spy. What could I have expected under the circumstances? That the Soviets themselves would investigate in order to find out the real truth? Very unlikely, especially since the zone in which I had been caught was a secret military zone and consequently forbidden to foreigners and strangers. Besides, the strong currency (of diverse national banknotes), the silks, the underwear for ladies, the liquor, and the two bottles of cologne (three liters of the most exquisite and rare kind) strengthened their suspicions.

However, I was really relying upon this rich assortment of Western commodities to help me, on the one hand, to find my way about during my wanderings to find my parents; or, on the other hand, to get me out of any trouble more easily. But things had turned out differently.

Except for the fact that they took everything I had on me, nothing went as planned. I went out seeking wool, and came back shorn.

"So, this is the merchandise with which you buy your information and your agents," my new interrogator charged . . . What could I say under the circumstances? The best thing to do was to sing a truthful tune. In this way it would be easier for me to justify the forgery of my ID card. A forgery is something closer to the experience and logic of a policeman, any policeman from anywhere. He would understand more easily that this was the only way for me to go beyond the iron curtain and to trace the footsteps of my parents . . .

So I did the best thing: I confessed that I was carrying a forged ID card. Then I continued with an account of my venture.

"How long would it have taken with a genuine passport? And if I had managed to get it, how could I have made so many trips? Moreover, had I had true papers from the West, wouldn't I have aroused the same suspicion in you, captain? What would have been your conclusion as a policeman or as a K. G. B. officer?"

By looking at his face, I realized that I had succeeded in putting some doubt into his soul, that I could be right and that my story was indeed as I told it. But can you really measure your strength against the devil?

The fact that I proceeded with relative ease during the interrogation and that I gave a fairly honorable answer to the questions asked, succeeded in partially exonerating me; justifying the forged identity card was the only possible course that could be understood by a professionally warped mind. The practicality of this stratagem was known only to myself. Indeed, while I was in Celle-Saint-Cloud, I was assigned the instruction of a unit made up of Ruthenians and White Russians. Because they spoke bad German and I did not speak Russian at all, I used the services of a translator, and little by little, I learned Russian, not very much, but in any case I was now in the position of understanding it very well. My spoken Russian was, of course, bad; and as far as writing and reading their Cyrillic letters, I was at a loss. In any case, my Russian helped me a great deal now, since my interrogators — very inconspicuously — would talk among themselves about matters which should not have been known to the person being interrogated.

So, from their swearing at me, from their exchange of comments with each other, signs, and some help from my imagination I was able to get a well-thought-out answer ready while the interpreter was rendering into German the questions of the interrogator. This is how I was able to find out, for example, that they knew precisely that I had come from the French zone and not from somewhere else, and that they had expected me to get caught from one day to another. I also managed to answer their questions in such a manner that, instead of infuriating them, by the end of the first interrogatory session with the second captain I was able to wring from him a promise that he would search for my parents and let me know as soon as he got any news. I knew he was lying, but I was satisfied that I had succeeded in shaking his belief that I could not be anything but an American spy. They were afraid of the Americans, maybe because they were allies . . . In this relaxed atmosphere I was sent back to the cellar to get my lunch, with the warning that after lunch the interrogation would continue.

THE FIRST LUNCH

My lunch consisted of a slice of bread, soup, and a meal of rice with sauce and meat. To tell you the truth, I was very hungry, and the food was good. From what I gathered, it was brought from the kitchen for the Soviet officers. For three days I was given the same meal, under the same conditions.

On my way back to the interrogation, just before it started, I was asked by the captain what food I had gotten. "Did you get bread?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "Did you get soup?" "Yes." "Did you get *kasha*?" "No!" He asked this last question three times, and he got the same answer three times.

"What? Didn't you get *kasha*?" And because I said no again, he confronted me with the sergeant who had served me my lunch. To the outrage of the sergeant, I still denied having got it. The result was that the captain ordered the sergeant to get me *kasha* immediately.

When I saw the gruel handed to me by the sergeant, I said, "Well, I had this . . . I understood you to ask me if I had had *kash* (a kind of Romanian unsalted cheese)."

"What is *kash*? Where did you hear Romanian?" the K. G. B. officer wondered. Finally I understood that the boiled mash of theirs, made of ground and boiled cereals (millet, soybean, wheat, or even plain bran) which I was going to eat from now on, for almost nine years, was called *kasha* and had nothing in common with the Romanian *kash* made of sheep's milk. This stupid mistake made me almost betray myself. And since the interrogator was left with the beginnings of bewilderment and suspicion, I quickly gave him a plausible answer:

"During the war I had a friend in Romania who used to get *kash*, that is, freshly curdled cheese, from home."

With this I thought the slip went unnoticed.

During the afternoon interrogation, there were fifteen to twenty Soviet officers present. Among them was a colonel, most likely their chief. I should like to mention that it was very warm in the cellar, and after I came out, all perspiring, into the cold outside air (it was around the beginning of April in the region of Erzgebirge), and went into another warm room, I began to shiver. When I entered the room, the interrogator and the interpreter took their revolvers out of their holsters and put them

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noisily on the table (I do not know why, unless it was to intimidate me). The colonel, who noticed I was shivering and shaking, asked me in a soft voice if I was cold. Then he turned to the interrogator and the interpreter. "Put your revolvers back! He will be honest with us and tell us all he has to say because only in this way will he get our trust and good will. He knows that we want only the truth and he has all the reasons in the world to tell it."

I laughed and explained to them that the reason for my shivering was not fear but the abrupt change in temperature.

"Besides, I am not too much of a chicken. Right now I know that I am facing the famous G. R. U. and I foresee what could happen to me, even if I had no part in the business with which you charge me."

"This is no G. R. U.," the colonel chided me. "You are before the investigation team of the K. G. B. What do you know about the K. G. B.?"

I told him that I had read a few books about the U. S. S. R. while I was in the army and that the information I had about the K. G. B. was from those books. I knew only that this "organization" specialized in shooting its victims in the back of the head after roughing them up or submitting them to terrible tortures.

The colonel swore and shouted at me, "That is not true! You'll see for yourself that we do not eat people, as the capitalists have misled you. We are defending the truth and the right of the masses and the working class. We do not persecute anyone, like your police and your Gestapo of the bourgeois-landed gentry. Our bullets are only for the big criminals."

He kept playing this tune for about five minutes. Then he again began the interrogation. During that afternoon I found out that they knew that I had been working as an interpreter at the French gendarmerie in Mainz, and they even appeared very glad . .

"We shall have a mutual exchange of experiences by asking you to be so kind as to share with us the working methods of the French."

"But I am just a simple interpreter of German and French. I am a newly hired civilian and have nothing to do with the French gendarmerie itself and its working methods."

"This is not true. You see, we have civilians here to work for us: we are all K. G. B. You keep lying, boy, and this makes us certain that you are an American spy concealed in the framework of the French gendarmerie."

My denial and my explaining that I could not help them out were futile. The atmosphere got more tense, but they did not

resort to any roughing up. The "meeting" concluded with a report in which they wrote what they wanted. Then they read the report over to me, but I did not pay any attention, as the text had to be interpreted from Russian for me. All I learned was that I was mentioned as a member of the American espionage services, specialized for the Soviet occupation zone in Germany.

I adamantly refused to sign the report, and consequently, after I was given the first three boots in my back, I was sent back into the cellar. The cell was, like all cells, a dark hovel on whose walls were scribblings, names, and addresses. One of these, more conspicuous and scratched more deeply into the wall, read, "Vive la France!" I saw this inscription in other cells, too. Sympathizers with France, or maybe French by origin, thrown into this whirlpool of events, left a chronicle of their passage everywhere. From the same cell, through the window which gave into the backyard of the prison, I noticed two identical automobiles — two sedans — bearing exactly the same license number. I do not recall exactly the first number on the license plate — 1, 2, or 3 — followed then by the numbers 1850. Why two identical automobiles with the same license number? Why did the K. G. B. need some kind of alibi? What interests demanded that the same automobile be seen at the same time in two different places?

AT KARL MAY'S HOME

After a period of three days, during which time nobody asked me anything, I was put into one of the two automobiles mentioned earlier and driven off towards Dresden-Radebeul. The driver and the captain who interrogated me were seated in front. I sat behind the chauffeur. On my right sat the interpreter, with his revolver in his hand. I was not handcuffed, but they placed a large trunk on my knees and warned me not to make any move, or . . . . . They pointed to the revolvers. If I minded my business I might get the chance to see my parents. The captain and the colonel promised to help me, but only the devil could believe Soviet lies! I repeat: They had not found out everything about me, that I came originally from Romania and had traveled a great deal.

On our way towards Dresden-Radebeul we had three flats. Each time it was the same tire, on the left side, just below where I sat. I am not superstitious, and I did not draw any conclusions. At the last flat, the driver, having exhausted all spares and other

means to fix the bad tires, had to leave on foot (we were now at the outskirts of Dresden) for the local K. G. B. center, and return with another automobile to tow us away. While we were waiting for the tow-truck, I had the opportunity, even though I was under arrest, to act as interpreter from German into French. There was a thick fog, and all around one could see only the ruins from the devastating bombardments. Right in front of us there came to a halt a long column of military trucks of the French army, which seemed to be carrying the equipment of a German factory, dismantled most likely as compensation for war damages. From the truck at the head of the column, a French officer got out and asked us which was the road to Weimar. The interpreter and the captain, very cautiously, squeezed me between them, screwing up the barrel end of their revolvers against my rib cage. I translated the question asked by the French officer, into German for my Soviet interpreter, then rendered his answer in German into French. O, God, how I itched to strike! I felt this was my only chance for freedom, but the revolvers, as if sensing my intention, pressed even more tightly into my ribs. O, had it been only one Russian . . . The French officer did not notice anything, said "Thank you," saluted, and continued on his way with the column of trucks. What could I have done? Damn this human impotence!

I missed a rare opportunity, maybe the only one! Finally, the tow-truck came and then we were in Radebeul, at the Karl May castle.

In the huge entrance lobby we waited for over two hours until there came a noisy group of Soviet officers headed by a pot-bellied colonel. The colonel stopped in front of me, looked at me, and ordered my companions to take me into a cell.

This time the cell was not in the cellar but in an attic of Karl May's stables. Of the three cells up there I was given cell 3, in which I remained for four days, without anybody asking me anything. Strange experiments on the detainees by these interrogators! They were always in a hurry when your turn came. They always reproached you for stealing their time; they had so much work to do and you delayed them. But after this, they let you languish for days and weeks. From being the most interesting case, you became totally nonexistent. And you lingered and lingered, going to pieces with your uncertainty and suppositions, only to be abruptly noticed again and brutally interrogated in the most varied and ingenious ways — twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four, for days and weeks, fiendishly.

After four days in the attic of the stables, I was transferred below, in the same stables, to cell 7, where I came across a Soviet silviculturist who had been interrogated and accused of high treason.

At first I suspected that I had been transferred so that I could be sounded out by an informant so they could eavesdrop on our conversation with one of the listening devices with which all the rooms were filled. I do not think this man was one of their informers, because he was too bitter about everything and did not feel like talking. He just walked up and down in his cell.

But after so much lingering, we finally got some action. The silviculturist and I were tormented in a fiendish fashion. They started with a sort of harassment that I had not experienced so far. I was not supposed to sleep until between twelve midnight and six in the morning. But, exactly five minutes after the lights went out, I would be taken out to be interrogated and kept until 4:30 or 5:00 a. m. By the time I was brought back into the cell and was getting ready to lie down, it was six o'clock and at this hour, instead of being able to sleep after an exhausting interrogation and the eventual beating, I was forced to walk in my cell. I was constantly spied upon, through the peephole in the door, by the watchful eyes of the soldier guard, and any breaking of rules resulted in punishment. I wonder if the happy, free people know that one punishment leads to another, more and more severe, like concentric circles rippling water, like those described by Dante in his *Inferno*.

Between 3:00 p. m. and 10:00 p. m. there was a second wave of interrogations, led by a different interrogator, who would work you from the very beginning, giving you a completely fresh start, and keep at it until evening.

If you were not a good boy and took too much of the poor interrogator's time, you would end up with new surprises, every time, such as subtle beating, a cell with protruding nails, standing on ice, crouching on a barrel, standing in a dark room, standing in front of a blinding light, shifts from a dark room to blinding lights and from blinding lights to the dark room until your head and eyes were splitting with the pain, a Lenten-type fast, the treadmill, the club, the sandbag beating, the beating on the testicles with sticks . . .

Then you returned to the cell, and this cycle went on, as day follows night and night follows day, rendering you apathetic by the endless pressure at the whims of a uniformed man who received a fat pay check from the moral and judicial official

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representing the Soviet state. How cruel it is to be obsessed with sleep and exhaustion! Once caught in this diabolical regimen, as soon as you faced the interrogator and he gave you permission to sit on a chair, you fell asleep, no matter how much you did not want to, and he woke you up right away by throwing cold water over your head or by poking you in the ribs. Then the questions started, asked simultaneously by several interrogators in the same craftily jumbled manner, without any logical sequence among them, whipping you like a stormy rain, from the side you least expected . . . And all you wanted to do was to sleep . . .

Under such circumstances you ended up making any statement just to get some peace, that is, the peace of sleep.

They would always have new interrogators who kept coming, but the procedure was still the same, and by the end of the cycle of questioning you gladly confessed that you had killed Karl Marx or that the milk you sucked from your mother's breast had been sour because she was a bigger whore than Messalina.

It also happened that under the pressure of the stupid questions, stubbornly asked, hundreds and thousands of times, you could fall asleep even while you were awake. The interrogation in itself did not matter since the final result was always the one expected, and this was not due to the intelligence or shrewdness of those who had given the instructions but to the interrogators' becoming fed up themselves.

In the end, the interrogator had to report a guilty plea, by which Soviet justice proved or justified its position, the measures taken, its basic policy, and its crimes. The interrogators were just an ordinary group of flatterers, well paid in order to wring out some predetermined "truths." This made possible all the crimes of Stalin and Beria, the murder of Tukhachevsky and of thousands of military officers and citizens, whose only guilt was that they did not agree with the tyranny and limited vision of brigands hungry for power.

The methods of the interrogators conformed to the instructions given by the Soviet Ministry of the Interior. Because the centralized system does not allow deviations from the written regulations, every K. G. B. regional commander received a number of anticipated cases, classified and numbered by the center, for example, from 1 to 20. In case he could not get through to the center for instructions on how to solve a case, he had to solve it himself in accordance with instructions in a sealed envelope with a number which had to be matched against the same number from the center in Moscow, in a standardized procedure.

As we shall see, this was the manner in which they "solved" a number of uprisings in the Arctic Circle regions, where the instructions were given in envelope no 5 from the K. G. B. safe, since the regional commanders could not get through to Moscow.

MAJOR PUNTSUSH

At Dresden-Radebeul, in order to achieve the final goal which was to break us down through a weakening of the body, the instructions for the detainees had been entrusted to Major Puntsush, who came from Moscow. He did not seem to be a bad man. However, he had to do his job. He knew it very well. Others would have done it, at his expense. What else was there for him to do once he had gotten into this? He took up the profession because it paid well and gave him the greatest personal rewards. The precondition was to do what he was told without asking questions. Conscience? He knew very well that he had to perform misfeasance so as not to be fleeced himself. It was better to rob than be robbed. This is the kind of conscience, "serving the working people and the huge masses," which I came across everywhere, beginning at the inn in Lauter and ending at the remote Arctic Circle, where my fate took me in my wanderings.

These hoops around the Soviet barrel are indeed indestructible! A whole world of drowning people has grasped at the straws of personal advantage. And then, against its deepest convictions and in the name of freedom from exploitation, pursuing an illusive happiness, it has participated consciously in and fought for a new tyrannical oppression and stupidity for itself and for millions of other people . . .

Therefore, no matter how kindhearted this Puntsush was, he completely fulfilled his duty . . . There were eyes watching him, too. He knew well that from the top to the bottom of the ladder, on each rung, everyone was waiting to devour his "brother." One more person under the heel meant one less person on one's shoulders. The spying and detection machine functions perfectly, even in the underbelly convulsions of the K. G. B.

Perhaps because he wanted to show more zeal in front of his subordinates, Puntsush ordered a new search and inventory of the confiscated objects, that is, of the "incriminating evidence" I had on me. I do not remember if the foreign currency was still there, among my things, but I know for sure that many of my things disappeared just like that — especially those destined for

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ladies. In my knapsack there were left just the two bottles of fine cologne.

As long as Major Puntsush was the interrogator, things went easier for me. He did not rough me up. On the contrary, he sometimes had me taken to the adjoining villa so I could enjoy walking a little. But when I was interrogated by that pot-bellied colonel, who looked like a hogshead, I felt very uncomfortable. He would interrogate me only inside the castle and would take great pleasure in keeping me constantly under the powerful glare from a few floodlights. This kind of torture caused me to hemorrhage severely a few times. Twice this hemorrhage was so acute that he had to interrupt this pastime and send me immediately back to my cell. The Soviet silviculturist, who was still with me in the same cell, was frightened at the sight of so much blood. He washed me as best he could and applied some compresses fashioned from his own shirt and dipped in water from a bucket. I heard him wailing, as he shook his head: "Patsan! Patsan!" Later on, I found out that this word meant "lad" in my native Romanian.

The questioning continued in the same pattern. "Who was I? Where did I come from? What was I looking for in the Soviet zone? Why didn't I apply for a legal pass?" And so on, and so on . . .

Something new came up for me, however. For my confrontation with Thea they cut my hair short. Why did they have to do this, especially for the confrontation? I raised hell! I hit a soldier who broke in to hold me . . . I paid dearly for that.

Then something else came up which left me with my mouth open. At one of the new interrogatory "sessions" there appeared a new interpreter, who instead of addressing me in German — as they had so far — spoke to me in Romanian. I was flabbergasted.

"Finally here is evidence against which you cannot say you are not a spy," rejoiced the interrogator. "Why did you conceal the fact that you speak Romanian and Hungarian? Why did you conceal the fact that you worked as an instructor for the battalions of Ruthenians and White Russians at the S. K. instruction center at Celle-Saint-Cloud in France? Did you think that we would not find out that you had been in the fascist army? The truth is that you were one of the best and foremost and the most exciting instructor! Everybody called you 'Caramba' after the soldier's song with that title."

And they began to shove under my nose a set of photographs, demanding that I identify whomever I knew and that I tell them whatever I could about those I recognized.

Of course, it was in my best interest not to recognize anyone. "I don't know! I don't know! I don't recognize anybody, and that's all!"

If you persist and stick to your determination, with an unfailing "I don't know, I have no idea," you are spared many surprises and embarrassments. They could have done the same with my photograph, having it reproduced many times and circulated through their different camps and prisons in Mecklenburg, where some of the White Russians and Ruthenians that I had dealt with, were kept for trial or repatriation. The hints they dropped and the facts with which they tried to overwhelm me could not have come except from some garrulous individual who had recognized my face.

As a matter of fact, I was shown photographs many times; for nine years in a row they kept showing them to me. Thousands of photographs, out of which I was supposed to pick out the individuals I had known. I always denied knowing anything or anybody. As with any police in the world, you should not play the wise guy with the K. G. B. This is sound advice.

With this newest stratagem, the wave of interrogations intensified. As soon as the signal to go to bed was given, that is to say, at midnight, the ghosts started to walk. They would leave their daytime graves and, taking pleasure in the darkness of night, strive to enlighten the quick.

I was called up for "enlightenment" and was held until six in the morning, when the reveille was given and I again began sliding into darkness, the darkness of exhaustion in the powerfully lit cell where I could not stretch out or sleep. Then I would begin the daily walk under the watchful eyes of the Red soldier, "liberator of the peoples of the world," who stood at the door.

Strange waste of energy and bizarre concentration of force! How many thousand years of accumulated wisdom did mankind need in order to give birth to Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, to produce this masquerade! By rationalizing falsehood and suspicion, they succeeded in giving mankind a new kind of humanity. The Lucifer of the Christian Bible and the sophisticated Mephistopheles look like clumsy and stupid journeymen, bursting with envy, alongside these Marxist-Leninist leaders.

As I was saying, once you got into the cell where you had been sent to rest, you could not rest because the guard, under the threat of punishment as stipulated by regulations, did not let you sleep. And if you complained about the lack of rest to the interrogator, he would stare at you in wonder, then bark a fake

punishment for the "rascal" guarding you.

Then, not to get bored by too much peace and quiet, they followed with a new interrogation, after lunch — of course, with a new interrogator. Sometimes this new interrogation took place during the morning hours. You would hardly get back to your cell, when you suddenly found yourself recalled immediately for a little supplementary questioning.

As to eating, this was a chapter hardly lacking in interest. Lunch consisted of a slice of sour-tasting, brown bread, weighing approximately 450 grams (one pound), baked in a rectangular tin. Otherwise that mixture of bran and water (which even in the hellish heat of the stove would come out with a burnt outer crust in the middle of which remained a soft, mud-like ball of paste) would have spread all over the place. Eating it, you felt burning acid in your throat, and a stone in your stomach. I wanted very much to have Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Bertrand Russell, and President Roosevelt eat this tar-like bread. What a pity they did not! This was the bread eaten not only by prisoners but also by millions of working people from the Crimea to Novaya Zemlya, from Tiraspol to Vladivostok — except, of course, for their leaders and their stooges. I doubt that anything has changed since then, but in those times you rejoiced if you could get even that kind of bread — bad as it was. Besides this miserable "bread," given to you once a day, they would also give us, at noontime and in the evening, a tureen (usually made of wood) containing half a liter of boiled soup made of cock sorrel or nettles (which grow as tall as a man on horseback and are mowed with a scythe), or cabbage leaves half dried, leftovers after harvesting the cabbage crop. This was followed by a fourth of a liter of *kasha*, usually of wheat bran or crushed buckwheat or other cereals. This was my "meal" and with very few variations and surprises my food for nine years. (My chronicle will return to this subject with ample details as my story unfolds.) I was in the very heart of Central Europe, where, for better or worse, the Soviets showed some restraint.

Major Puntsush had a certain habit: As soon as you went to him for interrogation, he would ask you in a very friendly manner, "Well, how are you doing? How was your meal?"

I also always had the same answer, which would give me great pleasure because I felt it irritated him: "Very good! The soup was just delicious!"

"Did you have enough of it?"

"There was even some of it left over!" I was of course lying.

After these brief preliminary unctuous remarks, Major Puntsush would pull out the drawer of his desk and take out a loaf of white bread which he would place ostentatiously on top of the desk. I would stare at the white bread like a sick person who has not seen sunshine for a long time. Sometimes Major Puntsush would put a piece of cheese beside the bread, sometimes some sausage or even a piece of steak diffusing a pleasant smell. Then he would begin to swallow it, with great relish. From time to time he would chomp on it with a big smile, like a simpleton. Of course what he was doing was intentional; I can even say it was studied. Very often I sensed how he worked at this daily masquerade. Perhaps it was prescribed. From time to time he would wink or say, "Would you like to have some?" Then he would light his cigarette, and if he was in a pleasant mood, give me one and light it up for me. Sometimes he would wrap his food up in a paper wrapper and, smiling on his way out, pass it under my nose.

During his interrogations, several times he would return to the things confiscated from me, and ask me about every object I claimed I had had in my possession when I was arrested. He never again asked me about my money. What was I wanting to do, for instance, with ladies' stockings? Or with ladies' underwear? What did I want to get in exchange for the perfume? And many other questions. Of course, I kept repeating the same answers about the strong currency and exchange in kind which ruled the market during periods of scarcity. As to the perfume, I once told him that it was the finest French-made and that I imagined it would be liked by Soviet officers — renowned for their refined taste in matters of fine perfumes.

His eyes gleamed, and he asked me if the French products were indeed finer than their Soviet counterparts, since he personally was a great lover of such fine articles. When I agreed with him, Major Puntsush then ordered one of his soldiers to bring back my knapsack. But to my astonishment as well as the major's, the two bottles of three liters of perfume were gone. They had apparently disappeared into thin air. I smiled with the indifference of a man who soaked to the skin by the rain cares less about the few extra drops that fall on him: "Do the Soviets know how to steal, too?"

There had been an eyewitness when they searched me, and the eyewitness knew about the existence of the two bottles of perfume. Besides, there was much ado at the time about them. The eyewitness was now present in the room with Major Puntsush. It was the interpreter. They could have denied the presence of

any of the other things, but not the bottles of perfume. These had been taken to the storage room of my prison with much publicity, and were very much in demand. The major now gave orders that the bottles be found and brought back, since he knew personally that they had been confiscated.

The investigation ended with the discovery of one bottle, in the chest of one of the soldiers who were standing on guard. It turned out to be empty. The soldier was immediately punished, and since they wanted to convince me of the peremptory and impartial nature of their punitive measures, they put him right into the cell next to mine. You see, in this way they could also strike at me. Every time I had to walk past his cell, I would get — from this rascal with the slanted eyes — a free and gratuitous volley of curses, which included one they put into his head: "Fascist!"

One day, towards the end of May, as I was alone in my cell (the silviculturist had been taken somewhere else), an interpreter showed up, gave me clean clothing, and suggested that I change and try to look as neat as possible. After he left, a barber came, whose shaving felt as though he were taking my skin off. Then I was taken out into the backyard. "Do you have any idea where you are going?" the interpreter asked me while we were heading for a high fence made of wooden planks over four meters high and nailed together.

"No," I said.

"Well, we are going to see someone who is very important."

My imagination reacted. It can't be the major. No! Nor the colonel either! They belonged to the station here, and there was no reason to dress up for them. I saw them almost every day. I could not address any complaints to them. If, as the interpreter said, I was being taken to some big shot, who else could it be but a general? So I said to him, after some hesitation, "To the general!"

When we entered Major Puntsush's office, the interpreter reported that I had already been informed that I was being taken to the general. Puntsush agreed, "Yes, you are going to see the general! How did you know? What soldier told you? What are your connections?"

For two days in a row this was the subject of all interrogations. For two days in a row it was impossible to convince anyone, even the major, that under the circumstances, my answer was but a conclusion arrived at by elementary logic and based only upon the questions shot at me by the stupid interpreter.

When this new interpreter, originally from Bessarabia — that ancient region of Romanian fortresses built to hold off the Tartars but later treacherously occupied by the Soviets — when this new interpreter showed up, he had all my trust and sympathy, for the simple fact that after so many years I now had the chance to talk to someone in my native language. How many times did I restrain myself from talking to him about escaping! I finally decided to make him a proposition: to help me to sneak away or even to run away with me. Once outside the gate, as I often was when he would escort me to the interrogation, it would have been very easy to lose our way and not find our way back. It was a good thing that I didn't tell him anything! He proved to be a mean fellow and would, without a doubt, have betrayed me. He was able to convince everyone, through some ridiculous tale, that I had ties to secret informers. Under no circumstances could I expect from such a person any help in escaping.

I was finally taken to the general. He was a lieutenant general and his name was, as I found out later, Zelenin. He was the K. G. B. chief with the Soviet occupation troops in Germany — to be more precise, the supreme head of the Soviet information and counterinformation services in the West.

He started by playing the same old tune: He claimed to know everything about me. (Of course he had been primed about me by his subordinates. As a matter of fact, the subordinates' questions were now coming out of the general's mouth: "Why did I cross over into Soviet territory? Where did I come from? Why did I hide the fact that I was a Romanian?" And, finally, "Why did I know so many languages? These are spy characteristics!")

I repeated the true story. I did not deny having instructed White Russians. I had no choice. But I did deny all charges of espionage for the Americans. It was here that I and the general disagreed. In his eyes I remained an American spy. However, he promised to make inquiries about my parents' present situation, and in case they were in some Soviet concentration camp, he would straighten things out. He did not insist any more that I was an American spy but asked me to be correct and to be a good boy. (What he meant by "correct" and "good boy" I still do not know.)

I was looking at the lieutenant general — short, with dull features, glassy eyes (evil and venomous eyes) — at his thin, cunning lips mouthing unctuous words, and I felt like spitting in his face. I could care less about his rank as chief of information and counterinformation services. Whom did this midget think

he was fooling? Maybe Churchill, Roosevelt, or any other of all those helpless world leaders. He stank everything around him. The words of Ecclesiastes came to mind: "Honey drops from the lips of the whore, and sweeter than nectar is the palate of her mouth."

The simple man in me, the peasant from the Danube and the hills with oil wells and the orchards of Prahova, was on his guard, ready to scent out this unctuous man, weighing whether I could pay the price offered for my conscience. I believe it was my heritage from the Romanian people, forged through hundreds of years of cruel oppression. For this plain gift and for this unsophisticated wisdom, I am indebted and thankful to all those generations which toiled on that beautiful land from the Tisa to the Dniester, from the Danube to the Black Sea — to those great men: Mircea the Old, Stephen the Great, and Michael the Brave, and also to those ordinary men who died unknown like the flowers and the grass on the plains, because they did not want to be slaves. To them I owe my pride in not bending the knee before the fury of those knaves who were keeping me prisoner, in not selling my integrity for the bland promises of someone like Zelenin.

As I expected, Zelenin, the midget, began to reveal the price of his good will and "understanding." I think this task could have been carried out by any other dolt. There was no need of a general to strike such a bargain.

"Like I said," he said blandly, "we will stop the interrogations and the confrontations, and everything will be in order."

Why did he stress the word "confrontations" when there was no reason for them and no party to confront?

"With you, an intelligent and widely travelled man, we have other things to discuss . . . I mean, interesting things; and it is a pity, both for us and for you, to waste our time with trifles. You could be a free man and give us a helping hand. You know the West very well, and you have connections. We need such a man. You are cultured, clever. We need you, and you need us. Look, I would be interested in finding out whom you met in France, what Americans and Englishmen you met, whom you saw at the Hotel Victoria in Heidelberg, what their names were, what Romanians, Hungarians, Poles talked to them . . . and other such things," he asked.

My answer seemed not to satisfy Zelenin, because, all of a sudden, he began to yell at me, as if he were having a fit, and to threaten me with thunder and lightning, with Siberia, etc., etc.

Siberia is frightening even nowadays, in spite of the fact that in certain respects it is surpassed in prison regimen by the Soviet capital city.

"Look," I said, trying to quiet him down, "what else can I do but enumerate some names which tell you nothing. I was too insignificant a person and without the means of knowing who was who just by hearing their names. I was nothing other than a simple soldier, who lay in a hospital for a long time, a prisoner and wounded . . . Look at the scars of my wounds."

Zelenin replied, "You are a liar! I was wrong when I took you for a good man. You are nothing but an American spy. The Americans made you an undercover agent, sent you to France, and from there they slipped you this way after giving you special instructions and loading you with money. You'll end up against the wall anyway. How come you speak so many languages if you did not get special training in spy schools? Look, I am a lieutenant general and a chief of the K. G. B., and I speak only Russian!"

"In Romania, Mr. General, there are regions where the people speak two, three, and even four languages, besides the English, French, and German which every Romanian has to take in school," I said. In vain did I try to explain to him where I had learned these languages, and how I managed to pick up a little bit in every language I tackled. I could not stop his rage, provoked by my refusal of his proposition — harnessing me to the K. G. B. cart. I think that if he had known that I was cheating (I understood everything he was saying in Russian and did not need the help of the interpreter), he would have cracked my skull. But he was too nervous, sour, and too scrawny to be capable of any real violence. Maybe these very qualities were what placed him at the helm of such an institution.

He came to his present position with the troops from Stalingrad, was the leader of the K. G. B. in Potsdam, where there was a prison where all the foreign secret agents, spies, and important or dangerous people arrested in the Soviet zone were brought. As I found out later from other prisoners I came into contact with, either here or at other prisons through which I passed, this lieutenant general Zelenin had accompanied Marshal Zhukov, now under arrest, up to Moscow. I heard this thing the first time at the prison in Potsdam when I met some former officers from Marshal Zhukov's general staff or from his entourage. These officers had been arrested and were then imprisoned on orders from this same scrawny midget, Zelenin. I remember one of them, Colonel Alexandrov, brother of a poet and the author of a Soviet

hymn. I also remember another colonel, from Zhukov's general staff, who had been chief of the "art and culture department" of the army. Then there was a major, personal aide to Zhukov, and some subordinates. So this was the all-powerful General Zelenin, who told me that, in spite of his rank, he could speak only Russian.

As he was making that statement, he got the impression that I was smiling, and insisted upon an explanation. I offered to answer, warning him that it would make him angry. I said, "General, in the West, they used to say, 'You're better off as a garbage collector in the West than as a general in the Soviet Union.' " He did get very angry, and kicked me with his boot, knocking me down so I rolled to the door. He yelled at me, "We'll have another talk, don't worry!"

After another two days, during which Major Puntsush worked me over in order to find out how I knew I was going to be taken to a general, I was put into a van with dark windows. On it was painted the word "bread" in big letters, but it had an armorplate of steel. In it I was shipped to Potsdam-Berlin, to the Nonnenkloster Prison right behind Sans-Souci Park. Here, from my cell, number 3, which was underground, I could hear the chimes of monastery bells. Cell 3 was that cell reserved for those sentenced to death and the execution chamber. Wow! In a corner, though painted out not long ago, one could still see the traces left by bullets. Cells 4 and 5, less ghostly than cell 3, had been cells for those condemned to be future guests (for a few moments only) of cell 3. Cell 3 had only a common bed, a bunk made of plain wood. There was no ventilation; the cell was shut off with built-in bricks. Later they took a single brick out of this wall in order to give me some ventilation, and through the opening I could see, for a few hours a day, the play of a few sunshine rays. Since the room was dark, there was an electric light bulb in it, giving light day and night.

MARSHAL HIRSCH GORIN

As I was going to find out later, here at Potsdam I began to carry some weight. I had escaped from the "mob," that is, the lower rank, only to get into the hands of the elite. It seemed Zelenin considered me choice game. He had promised me we would talk again. He even gave me a promissory note: a strong Soviet kick in the back. I was to find out that Zelenin's kick,

accompanied by a few jabs and some other kicks (a great Soviet pastime), had been but a meager appetizer to the main course that was to follow. From that moment on there was no interrogatory session, not even a simple visit to a K. G. B. station that did not end in a beating with the *nagaika* (the Russian whip with several ends that was a modest variation on the old leathern knout with beads of lead at the ends).

I received my first beating here from a captain interrogator and his superior, the chief of the interrogatory and instruction command in Potsdam, Major Gorin, who came from Minsk and who used to just sit in at the interrogatories. I managed to find out the home address of this darling Major Gorin intending, if necessary, some day to look him up. I pray God to keep him alive because I hope and wait for another Nuremberg.

From a first sergeant who wore a "T" mark across his stripes as a sign of rank, I found out that Gorin came from Minsk and that he now lived near the boulevard by the railway station, on the fifth street to your left as you walked down the boulevard from the railway station towards the city. I do not know either the name or the number of the street but that does not matter! I will find him some day, even if it is in Matto Grosso.

I acquired endurance, O, Lord, when I was able to face those two weeks in the hell of Gorin, that Master Inquisitor of Potsdam!

I still remember the story of the mill in Sans-Souci. This mill was not far from my cell nor from the K. G. B. headquarters. The words of the miller who defended his cottage against the Emperor vividly resound in my memory like a prophecy:

"There is an Appellate Court in Berlin, Your Majesty!"

Listen, Major Gorin, the old miller (about whom I read in my German language book in the fourth grade) cannot but be an augurer for me!

At Lauter, where I had been arrested, sleeping time was set between 8 p. m. and 6 a. m. Here at Potsdam it started at midnight, but at this hour, as in Dresden-Radebeul, the goblins were beginning to haunt their victims. Here, too, they stuck to the same classic procedure that I had known so well. At midnight a figure appeared at a small opening in the door to my cell, as a cover slid up noisily, to reveal the face of a soldier who would ask, "What's your name?"

If your answer agreed with what he had scribbled on a small sheet of paper, he, smiling that he had managed to find you so quickly, would say, "Follow me!" And he would take you to the interrogator. If he happened to miss you on his first round, he

would slide open all the covers in the doors, one after the other, until someone answered with the right name.

In the rooms where there were more than one prisoner, the procedure was the same, except that he would open the door to the cell and point his finger at one and then another prisoner until his puzzle was solved. Sometimes this ritual turned out to be very amusing to the prisoners. Because some of the names were hard to read or to pronounce or understand, they found it funny. So the soldier gave up calling you by name and forced you to call out your name loudly while he looked for it on the list. There were laughs, especially when the soldier was stupid.

Later on, in order to lessen such unpleasant surprises, they adopted a new system. The soldier would ask: "Whose name begins with the letter 'V' ?" If there were two or three answering, the soldier would make each, in turn, say his name by syllables, and looking very pleased at the ritual, would express his satisfaction with those classic words, "Come on! I _ _ _ k your mother." Then he would lock the door.

This Nonnenkloster Prison, as its name suggests, had been a convent for nuns. After falling into the occupation zone controlled by the Soviet "liberation" troops, the convent had been turned into a K. G. B. prison and storage building, in keeping with the Soviet policy at home. Both the convent proper and a cluster of some five other villas around it had been walled in with a wooden fence, four meters in height.

The villa closest to the convent faced a soccer field. I saw it later on when, after some bone breaking at the hands of Major Gorin, I was taken to the doctor to be patched up, if possible. On this occasion, from an attic improvised as an ambulatory infirmary, I could see the surrounding landscape, including the soccer field and beyond, across the shining surface of the Havel River, the American zone, a welcome delight to my eyes. Right behind the convent there were two villas taken over by the K. G. B. commander: one for the internal security troops (who wore the blue collar insignia of the K. G. B.); the other for the external security soldiers (those with green insignia), that is, the border guards.

Behind the five villas there was another villa, freshly painted white. It was the white of "pure innocence." This was the seat of the court. But let me get back to the questioning. Major Gorin did not like my previous statements regarding my past. From them he could not ferret out anything which would please him. They did not prove that I was educated and trained at the German

school of the Gestapo, or at such a school in France, the United States, or England. That is what he wanted me to tell him, and I could not, since it was not true. From then on, Major Gorin, in order to get what he wanted from me, resorted to what he thought was the most efficient method of wringing out a confession: beatings and the fear of beatings. By an application of the experiments of the psychologist Pavlov, coupled with the "lofty" teachings of the pedagogue Makarenko, Major Gorin tried to create in me conditional reflexes grounded in fear. He overlooked the fact that I was not a dog or a monkey from Pavlov's cage; and it is most likely that he never understood why I did not salivate at his signals.

Initially I got a noisy beating, from which the pain caused by the blows was just ordinary pain. It was just pain from having something hit me and break against my body. But it was accompanied by a noise which was supposed to shake me deeply, first by the intensity of the sound and then by the sound of something breaking. To get such a thrashing and to have the instrument break up right against your back was supposed to shock you, to "condition" in you a fear of any more beating. I think this was what Gorin was thinking. At this first encounter he used round sticks made of beechwood, preferably broom sticks or chair legs. I can say for sure that the blows with half broken pieces of wood left over from the first blows were more painful than the first ones. Besides, the wood did not always break at the first or second blows. Luckily for us the suppliers were very generous and only a few of the henchmen would stoop to pick up the broken pieces but would prefer to help themselves to sticks from the fresh bundle.

O, God! Had the giants from the old tales had as much brains as strength, the endings of our childhood stories as well as the fate of mankind would have been different! What followed (and what did not follow?!) was a rather primitive beating like that given to horse thieves in the Orient, an experience which will never be understood by Westerners. They do not know the exact role played by the horse in the "horse-back civilization" of Genghis Khan.

Next came beatings with the more advanced rubber stick, then the beating with the sandbag (which left no visible marks), the beating on the testicles (the most horrible punishment applied artistically to the secret spring of life with the help of sticks the size of pencils). Rare performances!

Whenever they beat you they brought in the sentry with the

automatic rifle ready to fire. After the hands of the interrogator and the interpreter tired, the sentry replaced them. The series started, most likely, upon the recommendation of the midget Zelenin on the very day of my arrival at Nonnenkloster. They lasted for two weeks which seemed endless.

If these beatings could somehow have been stored and reused! I am striving to make them real to the reader, to make them felt, to make them understood, or at least to make them believed. In any case, I think that these beatings would have aroused pity in Satan himself. He would have cried, "Enough!" as he did in Biblical times for the old, ulcer-ridden Job, crawling before our Maker, the Lord, to ask mercy for the wretch . . .

Even today as I sit down I remember these scenes so horrible in their bestiality and futility. And as I remember, I again feel my wounds, the blows, and I am sore, especially the blows upon the wounds . . . And this gave them great pleasure! They joked and made fun of me. Were they deranged? How could they enjoy something like that? Even today I ask myself that. With their disfigured faces like ravenously hungry wolves, they jumped upon me — one, two, or three of them — and hit me until they went crazy. They rushed at me, their fellow man, whom they did not even know personally: They did not know what troubled him, what he was thinking, how bad or good he was, with whom they had no real quarrel. And they hit him until both he and they were exhausted. Stupid and maddening scene!

Little by little I saw how these heartless individuals detached themselves from the realm of the normal, how they roused themselves, how they worked up their anger and then let loose, like the sea which under a clear sky is stirred by a breathing wind and begins to shake, then roar and foam more and more until it threatens with rolling waves like the tail of a dragon. How majestic is the sea! But how stupid was the rage of my examiners! If the stupidity of Hirsch Gorin borrowed something from the majestic movements of the sea, I could have forgiven him everything and I could have wept silently within my soul.

I was racked by all sorts of questions for answers which would verify, no matter the cost, what Hirsch Gorin thought I had done. That was what he needed, not to change the face of the world or to prove the implacability of justice or the power of truth, but only to show his virtues as a chief and to make it up another rung in the ladder, to the supreme, final evil rung.

And because he could not get this, he flung himself at me with everything at his disposal; men, instruments, fists, feet,

everything. Yes, everything. What a horrible outburst of the beast within him! He would fret, perspire, pant, and hit — sometimes at random, sometimes meticulously. When one interrogator tired, another would start in while the first one, on his break, would roar with laughter, his hands on his belly, every time the prisoner was knocked down or thrown off balance.

It seems that the beasts of the jungle do not do such things. They attack because they are hungry, and that is all there is to it! Even the sadism of the cat playing with the mouse cannot equal the brutality and sadism of Major Gorin from Minsk.

What a diabolical outburst! It delights them to break a few bones, they savor it, it touches them to the quick of their senses. Very interesting this unleashing of the brute for which there is no inhibitive drive!

This explains why people while building for the future of their fellow men also kill their fellow men: whole generations of human beings, and maybe the best individuals. With Gorin in the vanguard as one of their tools and with the "wise" men at the top, this is what happens in the communist regime, exactly as I have shown so far. All in the name of the "common happiness" of the people, they kill people; and the whole of the happiness attained is only want, sorrow, and tears.

I saw it, all the way up to the Arctic Circle. It is like that all the way to Arkhangelsk, the Caucasus, and the Crimea. This kind of treatment is not unique to the service I saw. Others like it, the British Intelligence Service for instance, even killed their own men, on purpose, to confuse their enemies. Perfidy is perfidy, and England cannot be absolved of some of the guilt, especially since theirs was calculated with terrible coolness.

However, one cannot equate the perfidy of a strategy and tactics like the British with the Russian unconscionableness coupled with greed for power, in a regime perverted by a doctrine from which nothing positive can come.

I cannot say that I regret this bitter experience. Man lives but once, and it is good for him to have the satisfaction of a full knowledge of life.

FEAR OF BEING QUESTIONED

I began to be afraid of being in for questioning. The simple sliding open of the peephole in the door, the stifled noise of steps gave me goose pimples. I wished for my death, but death refused to come! It is so difficult to die, however! There were occasions . . . but death shunned me. It appeared that the conditional reflexes began to manifest themselves. I was more and more afraid that Gorin would rhinocerize me. I saw myself salivating whenever a red light came on, like Pavlov's dog. Gorin did not want my death — for the time being at least. He wanted to squeeze me like a lemon . . . squeeze secrets out of me, secrets which — with my bad luck — I did not possess. But I also had strength. It is so easy to say nothing, to be strong, when in fact you know nothing and when the cross-examinations do not provide the interrogator with anything that could be of any help to him.

As I said, the beatings left marks on my body. I was all wounds and bruises. My flesh was putrefying. I ached. The regularity of the torture, the new blows over the old bruises were terrible. Hirsch Gorin did not want me to die.

But in order to be stronger than Gorin and the reflexes he wanted to instill in me, to be stronger than the attack on my human nature, the attempt to shatter my moral self, to be stronger than the conditioning to Gorin's views, I had to focus on something else. So I wished to die! All my strength derived from this. A bullet would have been the easy way out! But that bullet did not arrive! And Gorin could not provide it, for the time being, no matter what! Death would have been my welcomed salvation, but it did not come. In the meantime the beatings continued with regularity. End up as their spy? At the beck and call of Zelenin and Gorin? Should I once and for all give in and get out of this hell? My only chance to get out was to admit that I had been an American spy, which would then bring about other tortures to make me a Soviet spy. General Zelenin made his proposition very clear, and it was a proposition that I did not want to accept.

No, this way was not the way out. Had I admitted to having been an American spy, other interrogations would have followed, which if answered as they wished would have forced me to invent a different past, then to be sent on missions I would never dream of. I was not cut out for a spy. All I know is to fight face to face,

like a shepherd, and to say whatever I have to say, in broad daylight in front of people. All that I had read about the K. G. B. and about its deeds and its methods of investigation was now real. I felt them on my own flesh. At Lauter and Dresden, they went from an initial politeness to a few roughing-ups, and then to one or two hostile kicks in the backside. By that time I had it up to my neck. Consequently I did whatever I could to ease my burden. Why not try, some time when I was not being watched, to throw myself down the stairs in the same way that others had tried and succeeded (as I found out later). But I could not do what others had done because the Soviets, becoming more cautious, had now put up high railings. The thought of committing suicide became an obsession with me, but there was no way to do it. Should I try to run away while I was being escorted to interrogation, and force the sentry to shoot me? For God's sake, where could I run? The fence was reinforced and four meters high! There was only one possibility left: On the day I was to be questioned again, I would not submit to the beating but attack my interrogator instead. This was pure madness, of course, but there was nothing else to do. Or maybe I had really gone mad, as had many others before me.

So I made my decision: I would attack them and force them to fire at me in self defense. Even if some of them did not fire, at least one would pull his trigger. The most cowardly, the one with the weakest nerves, would shoot at me. They would then make their excuses. That was their business, but I would set myself free, ending my last chapter, which must come someday anyway. Period.

"But I'm not going to sell myself cheap," I kept telling myself, to bolster my self-confidence and strengthen my determination. "I shall attack him! I shall leap at his neck. No matter how weak I might be, I will die squeezing him by the throat in a final desperate effort. Dead, with my fingers around the throat of my dear Gorin!" That day of blind fury came at last, and I was called to the interrogation. I went in having made my desperate decision: now or never.

Gorin was seated at his desk looking through the window. After I entered, I assumed an almost military posture, my head slightly bent down, my eyes staring at a fixed point on the floor, but not seeing anything in particular. I do not know if my face and posture could tell anything, but I wanted to look strong. I waited for Gorin to get near me so I could jump him. This time, however, he only turned towards me and started to yell: "How

much longer will you put on those belligerent airs? How long do you intend to keep silent and hide the truth, you fascist beast?"

"I have told you all there is to tell," I said, talking to him as an equal. "For your information I don't give myself airs. All that I have spoken was nothing but the truth. Your problem is that you have several truths, and you don't know which is which. And if you don't like what I have told you, write down whatever you want in your papers. They'll stay with you because I am not going to sign my name underneath your fancies. Are you satisfied, Mister Gorin? Do you think that I have no way out of your hell? Well, I do! You want to find me guilty by whatever means, to prove your vigilance and industry. I shall prove, however, that you are the informer for the Americans. I know your name from their secret archives. Hear, the interpreter here is my witness that I charge you with spying and betraying your Soviet motherland, and you will not dare touch me any more! Why should you prove that I am a spy when I can prove that you too are a spy? In truth, you will end up against the wall sooner than I!"

The interpreter, taken aback, wrote down my words exactly. He did not add or take out anything that I had said, as he was wont to do in the past. For a moment Gorin was thrown off balance by my utterly fanciful allegations. But he abruptly recovered and dashed at me furiously. He hit me, with hate in his eyes, and enraged, struck me at random, and I, like a coward, stepped back, trying to avoid his blows until he cornered me. My solemn decision to attack melted away. I was cut short of any heroic behavior. I lost my voice. In my mind I yelled at myself, "Coward! Coward! Coward!" And as if Gorin alone were not enough for the task, the interpreter came at me from another side and began to hit me too, pounding me with his fists and pushing me towards the major. Now I had to duck blows from two sides. The blows kept pouring on me like hailstones. Crushed, desperate but angry at my own cowardice and impotence, I ran between my two attackers and — I do not know how — from the desk at which I was supposed to sit and sign a confession, I grabbed the inkpot containing blue ink and threw it at the captain-interrogator who was still sitting at his desk and roaring with laughter. Then I spun around like a tiger, grabbed the one-legged stool, and threw it at the interpreter as he dashed at me. The stool hit the desk, rebounded, and fell into pieces against the wall. In a few seconds the soldiers on guard outside in the hall entered the room. Perhaps they were alerted by the commotion (not very likely), perhaps the captain sounded the

alarm. They rushed up to me, held me down, tying my hands and my legs. As soon as this was done, they left, with the exception of one with his machine gun in hand pointed at me. Gorin, too, had left the office, but he returned very soon, holding a cat-tail in his hand. The cat-tail is a famous knout or whip with seven ends. Gorin, rushing towards me, whipped me on the face.

I do not know how I pulled myself together, but, though tied up, I jumped up; and since Gorin stood near me, I threw myself headlong against him. He managed to ward off my attack and quickly get hold of another stool, which he threw at my head. I raised my bound arms up instantly, my left arm in front of my right, in order to protect my skull. The stool thrown with such fury broke my forearm. Gorin's blow broke the two bones of my left arm right next to the wound I had received in the last days of the war. Since then I have had this weak left arm, which does not let me forget Gorin even today. The rotation of my left wrist is now totally blocked, and my forearm is deformed. It is my greatest memento from the men of the K. G. B., Major Gorin from Minsk, whose residence is on the fifth street crossing the boulevard of the railway station as you walk toward the city. A memento from Hirsch Gorin, the defender of nations, human rights, truth, and kindness, the seeker out of spies and criminals against mankind. I wish you, Major Gorin, were still alive too, and that we could testify as to your kindness and the kindness of Zelenin, Colonel Vatsurin, Colonel Grishchuk, commissars Terlesky, Kodlear, and Ionel the American (whose real name was Birman), Sklipoi, and the others who you yourself would rat on at a new Nuremberg — so that together you could testify as to all you did and undid in the service of the honey-tongued hypocrisy of the humanitarians in the Kremlin.

How long they beat me I do not know. They must have poured water over me, because I know I woke up and they beat me again. Then I remembered nothing. Did they beat me while I was unconscious? Only you know this, Major Gorin!

I woke up wet and covered with blood. There was blood all over my body, and that blood was clotted. All my bones ached. I did not care for anything. Any movement caused terrible pain. I had the sensation that most of the pain was in my face. I had been whipped all over with the knout — once a Russian instrument, nowadays Soviet.

I sit down today and ask myself, after so many years, "Were you, at least, Major Gorin, paid properly? Were you at least promoted to colonel or general, like the midget Zelenin, whom

you too might have detested but who was your boss, whom you had no choice but to obey? . . . . . Did you get any medals? Or did Zelenin take them all, as your bosses always did, that is, take the cream for themselves! It would be a pity, Major Gorin, if all that violence and energy were wasted! However, the first Nuremberg will be followed by a second one where you will have to account for all your crimes and savagery — infinitely more numerous crimes than those tried and given sentences at the first Nuremberg . . .''

I woke up in my cell, the cell where others had been shot in the dark. There was nothing else in this cell except what I had on me, including my overcoat, which served me both as mattress and cover blanket. I felt sorry for my overcoat because I had to tear its lining. I felt the urge to refresh my body. I moistened the torn lining with water from the dish in the cell, and then I covered my face with it. It was soothing. Had Mother been there, or a woman's hand, she would have anointed my wounds with oil. But all I had was the lining of my overcoat.

I paid dearly for this momentary soothing: a crust which had hardened over my facial wounds during my unconsciousness, now moist, I scraped it off with my nails in a fit of recklessness. My infected fingers and my dirty nails as I scratched my face, naturally infected my wounds. Day after day the infection spread and spread until it covered all of my face and my forehead, my nose, my ears, and my neck. I looked like a piece of raw meat, a Job like the one in the sculpture by Ivan Mestrovich, screaming in pain with his hands towards the Heavens, which turned a deaf ear to him.

But now I was left alone. No one entered my cell any more. Neither Gorin nor Zelenin wanted me for questioning. No one wanted anything from me. I wish I could have seen the fear in your soul, you peddler of buttons and trinkets turned all-powerful with the K. G. B.! Why didn't you send for me again, to be taken to your stormy interrogations? Although I do not see how you could have questioned me, since I could hardly turn from one side to another. Maybe they told you, Major Gorin, that I banged several times against the door. Your soldiers must have reported it to you, since you were their god and they feared you, that I asked for you to come back and look at what you had done. The soldiers knew your power and the savagery of your punishments. You were relentless when defending your so-called proletarian legality and socialist humanitarianism.

I asked your soldiers to take me to the doctor. But nobody

came. You could not but be aware of the fact that they sent me no doctor: Nobody moved at Potsdam without your knowledge or without your orders. Days and nights passed. I do not remember how many because I had lost count. One day the door of my cell opened and someone entered. Since I was not yet dead, I opened my eyelids with my fingers by pushing them up, in order to see. I saw you, Major Gorin. I do not think you can have forgotten the difficulty with which I pushed my wounded eyelids open. This was your work. You looked triumphant, like the savage warrior who yells while stomping on the chest of the victim he has just killed. You yelled at me to get up.

You should know that I would have gladly stood up and hit you in front of your whole retinue which had followed you into the cell. Then I realized that you were not the main attraction, but just a simple monkey-face accompanying a general whom I had never seen before. The general asked you why I was so disfigured, and you, major in the Soviet Secret Service, told him something in such a low voice that I could not make anything out. You should remember the scene, if not for my sake as your victim, at least for your pride in standing beside one of your generals. I mean one of the great generals. I was holding my eyelids open with my fingers. The sight of such a scabby, unworthy fellow and all the disgust that I must have inspired in you (in spite of the fact that I was the result of your unmistakable work), cannot have been forgotten by you, Major Gorin. On the left side of the general's chest, just below the heart, there was a very big star. I think it was the Order Suvorov, which I recognized from my readings.

I realized immediately that I was dealing with someone very important in your hierarchy. Then I deduced that this general could be none other than one of two generals with the same surname, Simionov, who were at that time in Germany. I also knew that one of the two had been given the Suvorov medal. I had learned this from a conversation with some German citizens while riding the train before my arrest and while we were traveling through a zone occupied by Soviet soldiers.

It seemed my fate was to know everything without being a secret spy for the Americans as Major Puntsush and the Moldavian interpreter had surmised earlier. During this same conversation, I had also learned that this General Simionov was supposed to be one of the very few very well-trained Soviet commanders, remarkably cultured and very seldom working for the Red Army. These rare commanders were fluent in several West European

languages.

Upon this surmise I addressed the general in French, asking him if I could have a conference with him. He did not answer directly but spoke to the interpreter, who told me that the general asked what I wanted from him.

Russian provisional government and Bolshevik coats of arms (1917-1918)

"I should like to know," I said, "if the K. G. B. treats people as the newspapers say, that is, like the Nazi Gestapo camps."

"Why?" the general asked in French.

"Because after I was brought to this condition which you can now see for yourself personally, and which no one here can deny, I asked for a doctor but was not even accorded an answer. Moreover, since then nobody has entered this cell until today, when a general is paying me this visit," I said.

"What's wrong with you? What happened? What did they do to you?" he asked in French.

"Why don't you ask Major Gorin, who is right here in front of you?" I said.

They spoke to each other in Russian, whispering; and I gathered from Gorin's answers that he claimed that I had not asked for a doctor. As you can see, the stronger became the weaker. The personal advantage of rank turned to weakness, supported only by the crutches of the big lie. With no further talk, I was sure the general sensed the naked truth. But it did not make any sense to me to aggravate the position in which I found myself — a man who, anyway, did not have the power to confront the political Hirsches and Zelenins.

"You can be sure that a doctor will come. I promise you that!" This much General Simionov answered and left.

Indeed, that same day, before midnight, the time to go to bed, a male nurse entered my cell and gave me two pills to swallow. I could tell from the taste that they were two vitamin "C" tablets. Then the male nurse left. I began to have terrible pains. The arm with the broken bones began to swell very much. I felt dizzy and moved with difficulty. My skin was black and blue, green and black with tiny red veins of blood spread among those multiple colors. I had all the colors of the rainbow on my skin.

In this condition a thought dawned on me: If I truly wanted to die, then I should do something about it! So I decided to go on a hunger strike. I did not want to eat or drink any more. And still, no one asked me anything. I was half dead and did not feel any more pain, as if there were nothing wrong with me. A kind of numbness seized my whole body. I became ethereal. I saw and perceived things with great sharpness and quickly, and I had the odd sensation that I was floating, that I was feeling great. I had no desire for anything. All around me there were only stupid people, or worthless clay.

THE FIRST DOCTOR

During this state of total indifference I was twice carried on a stretcher to the interrogator. A major medical officer was present, the doctor of the Nonnenkloster Prison. A prosecutor and a few Soviet officers accompanied by my friend Gorin came afterwards. In spite of my condition, I could not help noticing one small detail. The stools in the room had now been fastened to the floor with some hobnails holding down their legs. The prosecutor asked me why I kept refusing the food.

"I want to die! Why do you ask?" I said.

"How many days have you gone without food?" he asked.

"I don't know, and I don't care. Don't you understand that I want to die? Don't you want that, too? Isn't it allowed? Don't you take pains to kill fascists? Now you'll have one less fascist! I'm fed up with your beatings. I'm fed up with myself. I don't want anything, and all of you make me sick!" I said.

"Why do you insult us? See, you are acting stupidly!" the prosecutor said, and, like a pimp, proceeded to "convince" me. His

nonsense buzzed in my ear like bumble bees. I did not care, and I did not know what else they talked about. I had gotten it into my head to die, and, once I had gotten so far, I was not afraid of anything. I had no other wish. I had no other compulsion. I was free, free of everything. It was a unique moment, the one moment in my life when I was actually free.

Meanwhile a sergeant came, the sergeant in charge of supplying food to the prisoners, called undoubtedly by the prosecutor and the doctor. Though the sergeant said he had eight rations of bread, which meant I had not eaten for eight days, Gorin answered that he was mistaken, implying that this was unbelievable.

"Don't worry!" the doctor said. "We'll soon find out." Then he turned to me: "Take a deep breath and then blow the air out towards me with all your force." He was standing approximately four feet in front of me. "Have you drunk any water?" he asked.

"No," I said. Then I took a deep breath and blew the air out as he had asked me. Suddenly I felt a stench which could have killed a bull. All of them got up and held their noses. The doctor exclaimed, "What he said was true! He hasn't eaten for eight days. Had he had a drink he wouldn't have stunk like that!"

The prosecutor broke in again with his assurances that I had eaten, and lectured me, "You won't be beaten any more. No one will ask you anything. You can declare whatever you like. Be assured everything will go according to law." He promised that I would be given proper care and that I would recover. Therefore, he said, he suggested that I should stop acting like a silly child and eat my food. (On this occasion I found out how affectionate prosecutors could be and how much warmth and paternal care are buried within these souls torn by their care and concern for justice for mankind! The fox was shedding crocodile tears!)

I was lifted up by two soldiers and carefully carried away in their arms, not back into cell 3, but to a soft bed with a mattress, a sheet, and a bed cover, in the attic where they had set up the ostensibly improvised hospital room. After I was left alone with the doctor, he asked me, in fairly correct German, how old I was, where I came from, why I had come here, and how I had gotten here. I answered all the questions he asked. He shook his head in disappointment. I had not yet seen myself, but by feeling my body I realized how swollen it was. My broken arm ached. I felt an itching all over my face, and I could not close my eyelids — they felt like lead. The doctor trimmed my beard with a pair of scissors, washed me with alcohol, painted my wounds with blue methylene, which had turned green by the time I looked at myself in the

mirror, for the first time, in the doctor's "office." I looked, and I could not believe that this dry, black and blue smear was my own head. I looked like a devil from a fairy tale, a devil which, this time, had gotten into the hands of the K. G. B. Again, I cannot help remembering Major Gorin: " . . . as you go from the railway station towards the city, the fifth street on your right . . . "

After a new painting with the blue methylene, the doctor made me take a few pills. Then he put a few drops in my eyes and sent me back to my cell, ordering that I should be brought back to him at the hospital room, every two days.

What followed proved that this doctor, whose name was never spoken by anyone, was a man. I mean, an honest person. The difference between him and the others was a cosmic abyss. I recall that as soon as we were alone he used to take out a sandwich from his coat pocket, a sandwich which he made me eat in his presence.

The first day after I was painted with methylene, the cook, who had heard about me from the sentry, came into my cell to bring me the food. He whispered to me in Romanian: "I know you are a Romanian because I heard you once curse in Romanian. I could hardly wait to sneak down here. What did they and the doctor do to you to make you look like a devil?"

"They beat me up, brother," I said. I sighed and he did the same. This sympathetic cook who spoke Romanian (I never found out who he was and what winds had brought him here) gave me a bright idea. "Tell anyone who would bother you with his presence," he said, "that you are a syphilitic and then you will have some peace. These Russians are horrified by syphilis, only the devil knows why!"

It was true. Nothing frightened them more than this. Indeed, the "syphilitic from cell number 3" became infamous. The sentries were afraid to get close to me. Only the Romanian-speaking cook would come while the sentries were not there, and pass me the best food he could steal, always pretending that he was giving me the regular rations for a prisoner. He also told me that he had been ordered to bring me supplementary rations. Nevertheless, even he kept his distance. His caution made me think he had either gotten into hot water before, or he knew these people too well.

The business about syphilis, inspired by the cook, brought me the peace I needed. No one bothered me any more. The meal was brought into my cell during the daytime, the slop bucket at night. The bringing and taking out of the slop bucket, and

eventually the cleaning up were left to my neighbors in cells 4 and 5.

THE HILDA-BOB INTERLUDE

Had they finally wakened up as far as I was concerned? Were they convinced that I was neither an American spy nor a fanatic Nazi who, no matter the cost, wanted to die? One thing was certain: I was left alone, and after a doubtful recovery, towards the end of July, I was taken out of cell 3 in the basement of the building and moved up to room 14. Before taking you there, however, I would like to pause for a moment and relate an encounter I had which has particular significance for an understanding of the times and the people we are talking about.

During the questioning, Major Gorin, displeased as usual with me, once ordered the sentry not to take me to my cell, but, as a punishment, to keep me in a locked room which used to be a toilet. Divided in two by a wall, this former toilet provided Major Hirsch the great satisfaction of two extra rooms where he could vary his punishments and tortures. The room was very narrow and had a low ceiling, so low that the crouched position one was forced to take fed Gorin's sadism even more.

That evening, when I was being thus punished, the second cell next to mine had a tenant to whom I could talk in whispers between the walking up and down of the sentry. The tenant was a girl, a German girl from the eastern sector of Berlin.

Since under the circumstances formal introductions were almost nonexistent, I quickly learned her story. She had also been charged with espionage for the United States. Could it have been otherwise? At that time it was impossible to meet any one else besides "spies" and "traitors." "Spy" was the catchword of the moment to justify the losses and defeats and the bankruptcy. And it was hard to expunge this charge from the Soviet records.

Strange as it may seem, such charges of treason and espionage were not made against citizens of an enemy country, but of an ally, the United States of America. Do Americans know that their Soviet ally cannot find a greater crime in their citizens — who must then be confined behind bars — than spying on behalf of the Americans? This charge, whether proved or not, and sometimes purely a product of the imagination — materialized in twenty-five years of hard labor in the Arctic Circle. I do not know if American officials know — even though they may find

it unbelievable — that thousands and thousands of innocent people paid dearly for this Russian obsession.

It is a pity what the East European countries endured — the Baltic lands, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, East Germany, and Bulgaria. What I am trying to say is that what the respective peoples of these countries had to endure was never felt by the peoples of West European countries like France, Italy, and England. It is a pity that the Soviet steam roller got stuck at the Elbe!

The West lost a rare chance for an enlightening experience: getting acquainted with Soviet civilization, with its shortcomings and its pains of all kinds. If its collusion with the Soviets continues, time will run out for the West. The flirtation of the West with the Soviets, if it lasts too long, will, without doubt, communize the whole of Europe. This is a logical consequence. The apples will fall of themselves, eaten up from within by their own caterpillars. But until then, let us have peaceful coexistence as stipulated by treaty!

As I have already said, in the cell near mine there was a German girl, approximately nineteen or twenty years of age, charged with spying for the Americans. She was being held, like myself, because she would not admit to being a spy. In her version of the story, told to me, she claimed that it was the same story she had told during her interrogations and roughing up. She said she had fallen in love (something plausible for one at her age) with a handsome sergeant in the American army. The sergeant was also attracted to her. But they could not see each other unless one of them crossed the border. One day it would be the sergeant. The next day it would be the girl. The story could have had a different ending if the sergeant instead of the girl had fallen into the Soviet trap. I know of other, similar situations. Would the Americans, the English, or the French ever become aware of the sudden disappearance of one of their men? I do not know, but I did meet such men up in the Arctic Circle: men arrested and sentenced, or simply retained without any sentence whatsoever, and sent there for years.

The girl and the sergeant would sometimes meet in the Eastern and sometimes in the Western sector, until one evening, on her way home, after she had crossed the border, she was stopped by a Soviet patrol and asked for identification. As she opened her purse to take out her identification card, she dropped the purse and the contents spilled on the ground. Among the contents lying upside down, the quick eye of the K. G. B. man spotted

an unusual photograph. They picked it up and recognized that it was the picture of the American sergeant. I regret that I do not remember his name. The photograph was "corpus delicti" enough for the professionally conditioned mind of the K. G. B. officer. He immediately assumed the prolonged trysts to be really acts of espionage. Moreover, the arrest of any spy was professionally advantageous to him. Indeed, the arrest of a new spy proved vigilance and dedication in an officer, and consequently praise, medals, and greater trust from the Party of the "working class."

In this way, without anyone finding a trace of her, neither those at home nor the American sergeant, the girl was locked up for questioning, in the second cell from mine, where she would stay for a few weeks. Then what? How would her story end? Who could give any guarantees?

I saw this girl only once, and then through a door opening, but I realized how weakened and especially terrified she was.

When I was taken out of my cell and transferred to cell 14, the girl was still in that miserable place. Even today I ask myself if the American sergeant ever wondered (other than that she was "la donna mobile") what happened to his missing date. How much I wanted for this John or Bob to know how dearly this girl paid for her love.

CELL 14

As I said before the Hilda-Bob interlude, I was moved to cell 14. I did not understand why. I did not make any of the confessions Hirsch Gorin wanted. As a matter of fact, I did not make any statements at all. In spite of the fact that my "education" was far from being over, I was moved to cell 14. Was it that they were frightened by my extremely deplorable condition, for which they were responsible? Anyhow, I saw myself transferred from a lair to a den.

Before they moved me, they granted me the privilege (the reason is still unknown to me) of getting back the confiscated knapsack and a box with fifty cigars. In prison, with such capital you are a somebody! I began to feel like a nabob in front of all those other inmates, in this stopover on my journey to misery.

Worn out by routine like the latches he would pull daily, my "guardian" gave me a professional push, accompanied by a curse devoid of meaning, and slammed the door noisily.

Inside there was complete silence. Big eyes, a multitude of eyes

pierced me, weighed me. I stepped back and leaned against the frame of the door. I looked around, scanning the room and the people. I mumbled something in German and nodded my head in greeting. They quickly sized me up as an old rooster that had come out of a fight with its feathers plucked. They obviously knew I did not have the news from the outside world which at first they had eagerly hoped for.

A sturdy fellow measuring as much as two normal men in height and width, naked to his waist, his loins covered with a rag masterfully twisted so as to look almost like a pair of pants, got up slowly and strode towards me. Inside the room the heat was a burning tropical heat. It was in July. As I would find out later, this sturdy fellow who now stood in front of me was named Konstantinov, a Russian. He spoke directly without introduction. "Cigarettes?" he asked. "Yes," I answered. "Give them to me!" he said.

I took out the whole box of cigars and to please him, extended them to him. Modestly, he took only one. I had expected him to take the whole box, but he proved to be what his face did not show. Then I passed the box around to each of those there. And each, well mannered, like English lords, picked out one cigar. Thus we lit the pipe of peace. And these ordinary cigars were relished like real Havanas. Most likely with the prolonged deprivation, quality did not matter. I learned this from experience long ago. When in need and under restraint, man is content with anything and anyhow. Only at the filled trough does man grunt like a pig and turn it upside down in disdain.

Konstantinov, that sturdy fellow, unaccustomed to cigars, or maybe because he had not smoked for a long time, got dizzy after a few puffs. He felt his forehead with his hand, shivered, and then cursing in Russian at no one in particular stretched out on the common bed in the room.

The tenants of the cell, even though I came bearing no news, received me cordially, maybe because I was so generous.

Who were these tenants? We shall look at them in detail and in the order of their importance — who because of their past, their present condition, their associations, or their crazy behavior ended up here. But first a general account of the fauna in this cell.

Usually in cell 14, the number of tenants varied between fourteen and twenty persons. There were comings and goings like those at the "Grand Hotel." You came in alone, and, unexpectedly, you left alone. Only each transient himself knew where he came from, and would find out what happened to him after he

left.

All were floating with the tide of uncertainty, fear, and spiritual disintegration. That was exactly what the K. G. B. wanted. Here we were only residue, rags of people. The hoops of the barrels had cracked a long time ago, and the barrels no longer existed. No one was left with any feeling of security.

Sometimes the cell was filled up and humming like a bee hive. Then, unexpectedly, some of its tenants were taken out pell-mell, and sometimes, but for only a very short time, it remained almost empty. And then those who were left in it were sunk in sadness and loneliness. Every man who departed, with whom you felt a bond, meant a little bit of death.

I remained in this cell for almost nine weeks, and during this time as many different kinds of people with different kinds of temperament passed through. Some were drained of all energy. Some were good people. Some were scoundrels. Some were highly moral. Some were crooks. Some were tramps with hearts of gold. There were the well-to-do; others were quiet. Some were middle-class. There were greedy bourgeoisie. Some had a broad philosophical outlook on life, learned, ready for sacrifice. Others were loathsome criminals and burglars, vicious to the bone, ready to spy on you and sell you out for the most insignificant personal advantage . . .

INTRODUCTIONS

I see him as he really was: in cell 14, stripped of all his decorations, the Colonel, whose name was, I think, Alexandrov — a colonel in the Soviet army of occupation, who once wore medals and big stars pinned on his coat, down to the underbelly. Here he was, actually stripped down to the waist exuding a sour, stale sweat in this July inferno, and smoking very contentedly the miserable cigar I had given him. Bragging, oblivious of his terrible situation, he told me that his brother was a much respected composer. In the U. S. S. R. his compositions for brass bands and his anthems for choruses were sung from Murmansk to Yalta and Vladivostok.

He was accompanied by a chauffeur of German nationality, lame in one leg, with whom he had tried, when he was a real and "free" colonel, to escape to the West. With his chauffeur and his concubine, also a German, they had loaded a Studebaker with whatever they could and one night had left for the West.

But they had had bad luck and had ended up here. Of course, their story, like any story, had its complications. It ended with everyone getting twenty-five years for espionage for the United States and for high treason (in the Colonel's case). Now, all three were awaiting, here in Nonnenkloster, their departure to . . . who knows where?

Perplexed, I asked myself if and why it was possible that a colonel in a victorious army of a huge and "free" state would run away, stealthily, in the company of a chauffeur and a woman from his enemy, Germany.

Also here in the cell were a group of Germans from the Soviet zone, five of them sentenced for espionage, of course for the United States of America.

Near this group were two Poles, blond as straw, who came from England with the Free Poland Division which had fought alongside the Allies against Germany. They had come to the continent with all their papers in order, through the repatriation center, their final stop being Warsaw. When they had arrived in the Soviet zone they were called in for five minutes to make a statement. From the K. G. B. center they had ended up here, sentenced to twenty-five years each for "betraying" their country and for spying for the Anglo-Americans. They told me about some Soviet prisoners of war who tried to commit suicide to avoid forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union.

Soviet prisoner of war Konstantin Kustonen (between two American military officers) tried to commit suicide to avoid forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union

Now here was one funny thing: A colonel in the American army, an American citizen, a former chief of the American Aid for Europe (U. N. R. A.), was here in cell 14, also sentenced to twenty-five years for spying and betraying the Soviet "motherland." His story was interesting. He had been born into a family of White Russians, immigrants to the United States, where he had reached the rank of colonel and head of the U. N. R. A. organization. When he met with some representatives from the Soviet propaganda agency, he had been talked into asking for repatriation to the Soviet Union. Like any human being, and especially like any sentimental Russian acting in good faith, he was caught by an overwhelming longing to see his parents' native region, for the Volga, for the Urals, for Holy Mother Russia! He ordered his repatriation papers and was subsequently received with pomp and honors. For a while he was taken to official receptions, where, of course, this time as a Soviet colonel, he met his former comrades in arms — Americans, English, and French. As a token of Soviet high esteem (as he told us later) he was assigned two adjutants. He did not tell us, but undoubtedly they were K. G. B. officers. For a long time he was not given any specific assignment. He was a kind of jolly good fellow or Johnny-on-the-spot. He attended receptions and meetings with different representatives of the West. Through him, the Soviets were demonstrating how they received back their lost sheep.

However, in a few weeks, after the fanfare accompanying the colonel's conversion had cooled off, one of his two "adjutants," to the consternation of "Comrade Colonel," without any explanation began unexpectedly to talk abusively about the colonel. Then the colonel was arrested and taken to the chief of the K. G. B. center in Berlin, Lieutenant General Zelenin, with whom the colonel had previously met when he was U. N. R. A. chief, at different receptions given by the Western armies. Of course, Zelenin showed no signs of recognition and, rudely, read the colonel the order for his arrest for treason and for spying for the Americans. Thus the colonel's career was destroyed. Now, in cell 14, he was the only tenant who cursed not so much Fate as his own stupidity.

"And there are still idiots, like myself and others who envied me when I was a Soviet colonel, who expressed a desire to emulate me." Thus the former chief of the U. N. R. A. ended his jeremiad.

A few days after I joined the cell, a Dutchman, a singer at a night club in Berlin, was added to the cell. Intoxicated, elated by his success that evening and accompanied by some girls and other

revellers, the singer had crossed over into the Soviet zone, where a patrol arrested him. Now he stood there in our cell reflecting on the ups and downs of life, hardly able to believe that he had been given a twenty-five-year sentence for espionage. He kept saying the whole affair was a silly joke. Well, what else could one say? Truth has so many faces! Did not the character Berenger in Ionescu's play *The Rhinoceros* himself come to doubt his own truths? Did he not hesitate, admiring the puffy skin and the bellowings of the rhinoceros?

On the very day that I was brought there, after a few hours, they took out two French officers who had been with the Berlin garrison and arrested in the Soviet zone and sentenced to fifteen years each, of course for spying. With them and also removed were four or five Soviet military men who had also been sentenced to the same number of years. From discussions in the cell, it was surmised that some of them would be taken to the former Nazi camp in Sachsenhausen, others to the former German prison in Torgau, and the lucky ones to the Special Camp 4, "Gelbes Elend" in Bautzen. (The nickname "Gelbes Elend" was given because of the yellow bricks which had been used to build it.)

THE OPERATION PERFORMED BY THE ANONYMOUS PHYSICIAN

One unusual case, as a man with some status, was an individual who kept aloof and was very quiet. Something in his past — a particular experience or maybe just his makeup — kept him constantly on his guard around the tenants of our cell. We could never find out his name or the reason for his presence in the prison. But an extraordinary event pulled him out of his shell and out of his uncooperativeness and silence, and revealed him in his true light.

One day one of the prisoners, a German, got an abscess on his forearm, right on an artery on his elbow. After a while he began to feel sick with the pain. Then he ran a high fever and began raving. Frightened that he might die, we knocked on our door and explained to the soldier on guard what was happening and asked him to call the prison physician. It was in vain! In spite of all our entreaties, the guard did not even bother to call a male nurse. When we had lost all hope, the quiet man I mentioned earlier came out of his seclusion and, approaching the sick man, took his pulse, and examined the abscess closely. Then he

said apologetically, "The Soviets will not help us at all and this man might die. For them he will be one less headache. He has already been questioned and sentenced. After squeezing everything they could out of him, he is of no interest to the K. G. B. It is well known that a man with no secrets is as good as dead as far as they are concerned. So we ourselves must do whatever is still possible. In this particular case, if we do not intervene and operate, this man is lost, because the abscess, since it is on the artery, will erupt inwards and infect his blood. I am not a physician, but I have had some medical training."

I looked silently at this taciturn man, whose true feelings had been stirred by this unusual circumstance, this reticent man now coming to the rescue of his neighbor. He was a blond, handsome young man, between thirty and thirty-five years old, of German descent.

He made it clear to us that quick surgical intervention was necessary: "The abscess must be cut out before it erupts. Then it would be too late . . . " Since there was no one else in the cell to do the surgery, he would perform it gladly if he had the proper instrument, that is, a scalpel. Then he added, "As to the water I need, let everyone give up his ration and that will do. As for disinfectant, we do not need one. Cotton and bandages are unnecessary luxuries. They came into use in witchcraft healing, and they can be left out."

He told us to find a sharp object. We looked at one another helplessly. None of us had succeeded in secreting a sharp, cutting object. Then an idea came from the most experienced prisoner, Konstantinov the loafer, the incurable vagabond — about whom, more later. Konstantinov pulled a nail out of the boards of a bed and started to scrape it against the concrete floor. Then he passed it on to someone else who continued the honing. He in turn passed it on the next prisoner. After he tired of scraping the nail, somebody else took over, and so, from hand to hand, the nail was quickly sharpened. The operation was, of course, done with caution, someone always watching at the door as the sentry walked to and fro.

The improvised scalpel was disinfected by moistening it with saliva from the patient's mouth. As the anonymous physician explained, "Saliva is one of the best disinfectants. Just observe wild animals and learn from them. That is what the dog does!"

Following his instructions, we gagged the patient with a shirt to stifle his screams from pain; and about six of us held him down on the floor.

The actual surgery was delayed until the arrival of a sentry to our liking: a very amiable soldier who, like a child, enjoyed breaking official orders. The operation itself was performed very quickly. The "surgeon" proved to be very skillful. He cut, then wiped the "scalpel" off on his own shirt. Then he sterilized it in the mouth of the patient, who submitted quietly.

Finally the surgery was over. And, as I read on the face of the patient in front of us, the operation had been successful. Relieved of pain, the patient breathed quietly. Beads of perspiration covered his forehead.

In the eyes of everyone, the anonymous physician who had performed this miracle grew in stature to the dimensions of a giant. Ever after, his nickname was "the Doctor." During the next days, little by little, he became one of the group, which now deified him. Encouraged by our warmth and admiration, all his icy cold reserve melted away and he accepted our closeness. He realized that he had awakened the "human being" in us, that he had collected the barrel staves scattered around and joined them back together tightly again with iron bands of trust and kindness, which had ceased to exist among us once the good old days were gone. There in front of us was a strong, skillful, and courageous man. A man who had stood his ground and who beamed confidence. He was our support, and we admired him. Maybe we even envied him for the self-reliance which he radiated. Out of nothing, and with almost nothing, he accomplished something under circumstances which the rest of us had considered desperate, weeping in our helplessness. It was therefore natural that the power within him stirred our admiration and awakened our consciences.

On the third or fourth day, at his insistence, a Soviet doctor finally showed up, and after examining the wound, shook his head and said, "It's good that it burst by itself, especially that it burst outwards . . . Otherwise, it would have infected the blood!" Then the Soviet doctor found out about the nail and the sterilization method, and he gave out a curse at no one in particular, a Russian curse, very impersonal, to express his admiration.

In prison, time drags its feet slowly, as a snail drags its body. The lack of any preoccupation or activity is terrible, especially when nothing intervenes to stir things up or to give anyone something to do. Only the daily routines, like meals and the taking out of the barrels of human excrement.

The most difficult periods were those when no one was re-

moved from the cell and no new ones were brought in. Inactivity destroys the soul. The spiritual and intellectual vacuum in those who are forced to live together for a long period of time leads to depression. People get tired of one another. It is terrible to get to know each other too well, to see each other's shortcomings. Everyone had said what he knew and had shown what he had, but there was nothing there. There was nothing new.

During the first two or three days, any newcomer (I started to notice this) would use up his "dowry" and discover his own barrenness. It is sad how barren and empty some people are! How soon they begin to repeat themselves, like an old record. I recall one man who succeeded in cracking a good joke by giving a number to each old anecdote and joke he had already regaled us with. He would simply call out, "Joke number _ _ _." And without resorting to any words, the whole group would laugh.

In complete silence one would suddenly and unexpectedly hear him: "Joke number 3" or "Joke number 87" (a new one that we had never heard before). Everyone would laugh at first at this ingeniousness. But even this soon wore out.

In order to defeat Public Enemy Number 1, which was Time, everyone did his bit in searching out some treasure in his memory. The poorer ones began to unfold whatever they thought to be remarkable in whatever happened to them in the past, with or without their consent. With a profusion of detail, they would insist on relating how they got here, where they had been taken from, and how their interrogation had proceeded, which was invariably punctuated with colorful details showing how the "stupid interrogator" had been duped.

A few days were enough time to find out about all the relatives and acquaintances of the newcomer. Once his spring had dried up, the only interesting fact left was his life, and he would start all over again, but this time with more details and more flourishes . . .

"Leave us! Just go about some other business! I can take it from here," one of the listeners, fed up with hearing the same old record being played over and over again, would cry out ironically. "Don't you realize that I now know your story better than you?"

One has to live in such a narrow space, densely populated as this cell was, in order to sense the tragedy of a narrow mind and the dearth of knowledge or resourcefulness.

What had these people been doing with their lives until they had reached their present ages and social positions? Had they been just content to eat, sleep, sing, or play some light music — phony, sour, light music — and multiply (that is, if they had even assumed at least that responsibility of perpetuating the human species)? What a terrible, human cell! More terrible than cell number 3!

I seldom had the chance of meeting here any specimens of humankind who, in their conversations, would go beyond details of their intimate home lives or their amorous adventures, on which they never knew when to drop the curtain of modesty, on the contrary!

Very seldom did I have the opportunity of killing my time with anything but grist for cheap movies and novels. Seldom were the fresh and comforting riches that lie latent in the human soul revealed to me. When I had the pleasure to come across them, it was a joy to stop at such streams of perfect happiness and peace and listen to their murmurs in your ear. Close to such beings, your fellow creatures, spiritually fresh and rich, you are born again in the silence with new thoughts. You yourself are enriched with strength and confidence again in people and in yourself. Parting from this kind of person is hard, and you miss them constantly, for a long time.

Such a person, unfortunately not too talkative, was our anonymous surgeon. He talked only if you cornered him with provocative questions. Though very susceptible to suggestion, he would answer with few words, competently appeasing your curiosity. As a rule he minded his own business and never asked anyone anything. I think he was the only one in cell 14 who did not need anything or anyone. Maybe under these conditions of complete isolation, usually dreaded and avoided by the other prisoners, he felt better alone. I had the feeling that in this man there was the strength of a giant, nourishing itself upon a store of crops from the past.

He had not wasted his childhood, adolescence, or youth with trifles, as I and others had, and now the reservoir of thoughts could relate fragments of past experiences, elements to elements, facts to facts, and could figure out proportions and set up laws for behavior. He lived where we vegetated. Our wills were idle. His will had fruits from the plentifulness of years of past striving . . .

From the few things we could decipher about him, I figured out that he had been a member of the German S. D. (counter-intelligence). Maybe he had even been at the top of this "service." I do not know. He never told us anything like that. We did know that he had been arrested by the Soviets on their presumptions

or perhaps at the suggestion of an informer, and he had been sentenced to twenty-five years. He was in cell number 14 because, so he told us, he was waiting to be confronted with some very important members of the former S. D. in order to find out, so the Soviets hoped, some details about the secrets of the German secret services.

"Behind the everyday surface life there is another life. This may be true but it is known to very few, and this causes all the inexplicable leaps and zigzags that are not understood by life on the surface." The anonymous physician said something like this to us one day, when we had a heated and interminable argument and turned to him for advice.

"There are things which the man in the street has no way of knowing because the very existence and accomplishment of these things depends on secrecy. Publicity means they must cease to exist, or they are nipped in the bud. Some of these things protect the interests of the community as a whole (like the hidden roots and the negative heliotropism in plants), whereas other secret things, strictly personal and dirty too, are against the public interest. There are many things done in the name of the people and for the people. All leaders, from different epochs and different places, have justified their abuse of power in the name of the people; likewise those ill-intentioned, with their failures, stupidities, or incompetencies. Behind the screen, leaders of our destinies hide their unworthiness or their rudeness in arbitrary decisions. But success is also accomplished by these secret things. It all depends! There are good people, and there are people who are possessed . . . In Germany or somewhere else, today or yesterday, anytime, always . . . People cast the stone, sometimes in the wrong direction . . . often at good people. The demagoguery of the times, caught in the skein of time. Many make victims by using the dragon called 'the people.'

"For those who can figure out its meaning, the history of mankind is full of examples: Some are even mystified and misled by their contemporaries who are involved in these dirty events."

He continued: "I shall reveal to you such a secret, which even today is known by only a very few . . . I shall not tell you about Aristides, Bukharin, or Tukhachevsky, or about the crucifying of the innocent Jesus. I shall disclose something which very few from the British Intelligence Service know, in spite of the fact that this same Intelligence Service started the whole affair."

THE "HIMMLER SECRET"

In the secret archives, the affair is known as the "Himmler Secret," and it involved a top-ranking individual, that is, Himmler himself — one of the pillars of National Socialism, a favorite of Hitler and a founder of the Third Reich.

Between 1939 and 1940, the friction between the two German intelligence services — the Gestapo and the S. D. — came to the surface, and the relations between them got so bad that even the lower echelons got involved. One small group from the S. D. leadership set itself the task — besides their regular duties — of strictly watching the heads of the Gestapo. Their decision was justified by the fact that the Gestapo was meddling in the affairs of the other secret services — the S. D. included — but diligently brushed aside the involvement of any of the others in its secret dealings.

The surveillance of the Gestapo was being carried out in complete secrecy — known only to a few experienced persons — and it included even the supreme head of the secret service, Himmler — a master without a master. But the creator met his match in his creation.

First of all, the surveillance was aimed at all the Gestapo leaders who had any dealings abroad (either directly or through agents). The agents, as well as the agents' agents, and all their network were followed carefully until even the most insignificant details were uncovered. The watchers smelt something fishy, but they did not know for sure what it was. It became absolutely necessary to them to find that someone in the Gestapo was plotting against the security of the German state.

In the summer of 1940, after the defeat and occupation of France, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, and Norway, and when the German state was at the peak of its glory, the S. D. center in Berlin was informed by an agent in Hamburg that a big Swedish industrialist — if I remember the name correctly, it was Erik Thomson, or something like that — had arrived in Hamburg from Stockholm and had then left for Berlin. From intercepted dispatches, the agent claimed the Swede was a suspect and alerted the S. D. center to watch all his meetings and any contacts which he would try to make in Berlin. "I repeat," my informant told me, "all those observations were made, outside the regular daily duties of the S. D., and in the utmost secrecy."

The information provided by the observers further supported

the evidence that the Swedish industrialist had met with a Gestapo colonel, who had accompanied him to Himmler himself. (The industrialist had asked for an official interview.) The chief of the S. D. center, a former colonel in the Intelligence Service of Kaiser Wilhelm II, gave the order that, as far as was possible, that interview be listened to. In this way, the S. D. learned that the Swedish industrialist had made Himmler the proposition to invest his private capital in a joint venture, but — so as not to arouse suspicion — for the investment to be made in a neutral country like Sweden. The industrialist was to stake his name, commercial experience and ability, and his connections, and Himmler was to provide the money.

At this audacious proposition, Himmler is said to have laughed and asked his visitor, "How dare you to make such a proposition to such a high-ranking person in the Reich hierarchy? Did you ever ask yourself, Mr. Thomson, what people would say when Sweden is occupied by us? Don't you think it will be found out that I am the owner of this refinery you propose?" Well, if this was Himmler's answer, then it meant that at that particular date Himmler knew that Sweden was about to be attacked. It follows that the rumor, which had circulated for some time now, was not unjustified. It is true that Swedish neutrality was inconveniencing German strategy in Northern Europe. Then, why did the attack not materialize? Who knows? Other machinations? Other secrets?

It was reported that the Swede had replied, "You cannot occupy us! The Swedes will fight like lions! As in the time of Charles XII!"

The information gathered by the S. D. also reported that there were two or three more meetings between Himmler and the industrialist, at different intervals but during that same year. After a year, in 1941, there was a new meeting. Very soon after, an S. D. agent in Stockholm, Sweden, sent back a coded telegram to his center in Berlin, informing them that Erik Thomson had received, through the German embassy in Stockholm, the sum of eight million German marks. Subsequently there was more information, which disclosed that new payments were made to this same industrialist, payments which by the end of 1944 reached a total of twenty million German marks.

In the meantime, as early as 1940, in the southern part of Sweden, the tall and elegant silhouette of one of the most modern refineries in the world, equipped with the latest equipment and machinery for refining oil, was steadily rising. In 1941, before

the United States entered the war, the American government published a blacklist exposing all the big industrialists who were collaborating with the Third Reich. The name of Erik Thomson was among the first on that list. The acquisition of the greater part of his money seems to have been approved by the Germans right after the publication of this list, which seemed to have given the German banker confidence in case Himmler or the secret police became suspicious. The effect of the black list was immediately felt: the enemy of their enemy must be their friend! And so Mr. Thomson ended up a friend of the German officials and made at home in Germany. His visits there became more frequent and even out in public. He was among the friends Germany felt it could count on. He would come and leave in an official plane, and he was always greeted by Himmler's personal representatives. It is interesting to note that as the war intensified and the Allied bombings became more frequent, his visits to Germany became more frequent. Since he always carried an "Ausweis" (special pass) issued by the Gestapo center, he went into all the refineries and research laboratories in Germany as well as in the occupied territories.

The S. D. center, which kept up to date on the Swede's movements, found a somehow bizarre coincidence between his visits and the bombings, always one or two days later, and in the places the Swede had visited; and they drew some bizarre conclusions. And, since no one had the courage to back up these suspicions, the old colonel from the former Intelligence Service of Kaiser Wilhelm II, went to state his conclusions to Himmler himself. However, since he had suspicions from past experiences, he took his own precautions to preserve the documents he had already acquired, in case he should disappear. He photocopied all of them and placed them in the faithful hands of his followers, with whom he also shared his fears. Unfortunately the wise old man was one hundred per cent right. Once gone to see Himmler, he never returned! No one ever saw him again, and no one found out anything else about him ever again.

As far as the S. D. surveillance group was concerned, it was, without much fanfare, dissolved — its members scattered to the winds and given dead-end jobs. The thing they feared had happened. Wherever each one ended up, he had his heart in his throat. No one knew what was being thought about him, and all of them expected a reprisal from the Gestapo. One single informant among them would be enough for them to lose their heads (literally). They were sure that the old colonel did not himself talk more

than had been agreed upon, and had taken everything upon himself. They were only small fry who had to be dispersed. The events which followed, however, proved that each of the old colonel's followers remained faithful to the original task assigned him, determinedly keeping the secret. With great difficulty, risking their own skins, they managed to get back in touch with each other and to continue their surveillance of those highly placed men, against whom they could not utter a word of accusation or do anything.

Thus Himmler himself willingly abetted villainies. It was therefore necessary to gather as conclusive proofs as possible and then wait for the proper occasion to catch these foxes redhanded. And one of them was Himmler, who did or did not know everything. Another was the Swede, who without any doubt, was a spy but who could not be proved guilty, especially since he had a cover: officials at the top. The only chance for success was to look — at any cost — for middlemen, the go-betweens between the Swede and the Allies — to be more precise, between the Swede and the English. If they could solve this problem, then they would know how to unravel this whole ball of intrigue. But for the time being, the matter was kept deeply under cover.

For those in the S. D. there was no more doubt as to the part being played by the Swedish industrialist. Their last doubts about his game vanished with a new visit he paid to the refinery in Silesia, which had already been bombed twice and wiped from the face of the earth. It and its laboratory had been rebuilt and were ready to start to work again. They were performing the last technological inspections and check-ups. Only two or three days' work remained, when the Swede (as an expert in the field), accompanied by the chief engineer, who informed him about the latest changes and improvements, paid the plant a visit, making a round of all the installations. Two days later, and exactly on the day the refinery was to run its general test, a carpet bombing by the Allies wiped it from the face of the earth for the third time.

Who could dare link the Swede's visit (which could have been purely coincidental) to a bombing? After all, bombing was a very normal occurrence. And even if the evidence was at hand, how many could understand the details exactly and objectively deduce from them the truth?

Because of these bombings, at Himmler's suggestion, the government of the Third Reich decided to send some of the crude oil brought from Prahova Valley in Romania to the refineries in Sweden to be refined. It was a surer and cheaper way. In turn,

Sweden was pleased because, in a period of economic stagnation, her industries could become active again — all the more since her neighbors that had formerly been her suppliers had now become belligerents in the war. As to the Swede, he was satisfied, too, because the refinery which he had set up was prospering day by day.

From information sent the S. D. by their agents in England, the colonel's followers found out that some of the fuel produced by the Swedish refinery was not being sent to Germany any more, but was being loaded on Swedish ships under neutral flags and ending up in the gas tanks of British airplanes and tanks. Towards the end of 1943, some of those S. D. agents working in British airports overheard fliers joking among themselves that they had filled up their tanks with the "Himmler-Spirit."

British intelligence and counterintelligence services, encouraged by a lot of propaganda, without considering the possible consequences, hastily decided to take revenge for some Nazi propaganda a few months earlier, when the Nazis had dropped some fliers in which they had printed insults and a few postage stamps depicting the disaster at Dieppe, and depicting the King's coronation but with the place of the Queen being taken by Stalin. British propaganda, seeking revenge, devised and dropped from bombers some leaflets on which the words "Himmler Spirit" had been printed. Some of the older people still living in Leipzig and Leuna may remember that after one of these bombings by the British they found some leaflets which had in the center the imprint of a skull (bearing a striking resemblance to Himmler) and above the skull the words "Himmler-Spirit." At that time no one in Germany knew that Himmler had provided the British the opportunity to bomb Germany, with fuel for the planes, fuel financed by German money in a refinery owned by Himmler himself. In any case, the leaflets were quickly and carefully picked up by the Gestapo and the police, and the British did not drop any others.

The stamp

For the S. D. (who were familiar with the affair), the British propaganda office made a serious mistake. The dropping of the leaflets exposed, too soon, one of Britain's most useful spies. The fact that the dropping of the leaflets was not repeated is proof that the British realized it was a mistake.

But luckily for the Swede, the S. D. group was immobilized by Himmler and unable to take any action. Meanwhile the Swede, still shadowed by some of the S. D. people, paid even more frequent visits to Germany, especially after the Normandy landing by the Allies on June 6, 1944. Followed closely by some of the S. D., in spite of his precautions and because of an unexpected happening (which some day, by the laws of chance, was bound to come), he led the S. D. agents to his contact with British intelligence. This contact was a baron from Flensburg-Holstein, who held a high-ranking position in the administration of the Third Reich. It was now obvious that this rich baron and Himmler were the main persons involved in this affair. To expose them was even more difficult than it had been to discover their role, since their dissimulation was almost perfect. Even if exposed, the baron and the Swede could not have been arrested. The massive advance of the Americans and the English on the Western Front made any exposing too late. The war was now lost for the Nazis.

Today it is well known by some individuals that in April, 1945, aware of the outcome of the war, Himmler tried to contact the Americans, with some hope, through Sweden. He reminded the Swedes that he had a refinery in neutral Sweden, in which he had invested a huge fortune and where he had a friend on whom he could count until things cooled off. Consequently, he notified the Swedish industrialist, his associate, of his iminent arrival in Sweden, asking him to prepare the ground for him to stay there. In the meantime, Himmler, one should remember, had a few secret interviews with Count Folke Bernadotte, the Swedish consul in Germany, hoping that by going over the head of the Fuehrer he could more quickly and conveniently reach an understanding with the Allies. The last interview took place — and the S. D. knew about it — in the basement of the Swedish consulate in Luebeck. After discussions which lasted for five hours and did not produce the desired results, Himmler addressed himself to Christian Gunther, the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, asking him to be his go-between with the American White House. His hopes were dashed on April 24, 1945, when President Truman made the public statement that the United States was rejecting

any partial capitulation from Germany!

One woe follows upon another: Approximately at that same time Himmler received a very cordial letter from the Swedish industrialist notifying him that, in spite of all persistent interventions, the Swedish government had informed the industrialist that, under pressure from England and the United States, it would proceed to extradite Himmler back to Germany if he were caught on Swedish territory. So, Thomson asked Himmler to find another country to grant him asylum for the time being, and then to ask later on after things had cooled off and when Sweden would no longer be suspect. Himmler could then come to Sweden without any worry. But until then, the industrialist, as Himmler's loyal associate, would be at his disposal with whatever he needed financially. Disappointed, the Reichsfuehrer Himmler became a wanderer through Germany and finally crossed the border into the West, disguised and with forged papers. Caught by the English, he committed suicide when his true identity was discovered.

However, Himmler's business associate did not end up like Himmler. He came out clean. This Public Enemy Number 1 (as he was labeled on the blacklist from the White House), the Swede Erik Thomson, was awarded the Medal of Freedom at an official gala on the premises of the United States Embassy in Stockholm. Now we know what really happened and can see for ourselves the real kind of services Himmler's business associate rendered to Germany's adversaries, and it is easier to understand the whole significance of the S. D. in the matter. At that time, however, only a handful of individuals knew about this affair, without the power or the opportunity to expose this kind of game.

"To end this story in the way I began it," our narrator pointed out, "underneath daily life there is another life (although real, unknown to most of us, or, rather, known only to a few), which really explains the ups and downs in the surface life. But this is only one small example, and no big deal! From here on, to be sure, all our roads, though in roundabout ways, will lead to Siberia or the Arctic Circle, and because no one knows which of us will ever get the chance to be free again and to get back home, I do not want this episode, now known to only a few, to remain untold. I would like you all who were soldiers and bled for your country, to know that not all of our leaders had been dedicated. For many of them, their country meant only the chance to profit and indulge their self-conceit. They imprisoned and murdered in the name of the country, and in your name!"

With these words, the story of the anonymous surgeon came

to its conclusion. He knew he was to be taken away, some day or other, for cross examination regarding the secret archives, hidden in different spots throughout Germany, which the Soviets wanted to lay their hands on as quickly as possible.

From the way this man talked, we gathered that he was a small peg in this whole affair. Then, one day he was taken out of the cell and never came back. I have carried his little story with me. And by retelling it today, as a free man and back home, as the narrator had anticipated, I am fulfilling a duty towards him. It is now left to history to complete the story.

MORE INTRODUCTIONS

In the same place, that is, in cell number 14 in Nonnenkloster, Potsdam, there was a railroad traffic controller from the railroad station of Halle, accused of spying — also for the Americans — on the grounds that he had helped transmit some information and some messages hidden in railroad cars crossing the border. He was part of a much larger group, out of which only he was confined here. He was waiting his turn to be judged and condemned.

There was also a Soviet soldier, a former miner from Donbas, who had stolen the trunk of a Soviet officer. He had already been sentenced to ten years, but was still kept in his cell. An interesting person was Konstantin Konstantinovich, whose name, I was convinced but why I cannot explain, was not his real name. He was employed by the administrative division of the Soviet occupation troops in Germany. Here he got in touch with a few White Russians whom he had met in the old times while he was in the army of Kolchak. He was on the point of crossing the border into the West when he was arrested by the K. G. B., because of a most unfortunate book found on him. From inquiries, the authorities found out that he had been looked for by the K. G. B. and G. R. U. all over Siberia, for a long time. Here in cell number 14 he had twice tried to commit suicide by strangling himself with a wet towel, wrapping his tunic around his head. Each time he had failed because his neighbors came to his rescue, after they had been awakened by the rattles in his throat. No one got any explanation for the act from him. Though usually talkative, on this matter he never said anything.

The book they had found on him had been printed in Berlin between 1944 and 1945, in German and Russian, with a limited

number of copies, and was entitled *The Kremlin Zoo*. It described characters in the Kremlin, from Joseph Stalin to the messengers and even the doormen of the palace (who were really superior officers in the K. G. B.). He did not know the contents of the book very well because he had not managed to read it except for a few passages, which he relayed to us. For instance, there was one passage about Molotov: While Molotov was a youth, since his face looked somewhat girlish, he used to walk disguised as a girl and sell cheese in the market, but under his merchandise he had hidden leaflets which he distributed. Molotov had been kicked out of college because of a forged high school diploma. In Tsarist Russia any high school graduate with a gold medal diploma could usually get a scholarship to any college. With such an excellent school record, Molotov managed to register in college. But in the courses and during examinations, Molotov demonstrated a lack of the most elementary knowledge. The teachers naturally asked themselves how such a person could get a gold medal diploma. Out of curiosity they asked the officials of the particular district Molotov was supposed to have come from, and to their surprise they were informed that that district did not have a high school. In other words, Molotov's diploma was a forgery, undoubtedly done by the Bolshevik political activists, who often met in the house of Molotov's father. It had been forged to show their gratitude to their generous host.

In the same book was described, Konstantinovich said, the Viipuri incident in the Finnish-Russian War. It told of the heroism of the Finns who took part in the war, from boys to older men, from girls to women, small or big. It gave the details of how in February, 1940, the city of Viipuri on the shores of Lake Ladoga, was handed over to the Soviet troops. The Finns and the Soviets had agreed for the Finns to retreat and the Soviets to advance around noon. During the evacuation of those among the Finnish population who did not want to stay under Russian masters, the Finnish government, as a precautionary step, had left a strong rearguard on the outskirts of the city, facing the lake. It was bitterly cold and the lake was frozen. The Soviet command was outraged at the Finnish audacity in challenging — with their population of only five or six million — the Russian colossus with its population of over 200 million, audacity in setting up conditions for their withdrawal. So, in spite of their agreement, the Soviet command, not wanting to stick to the conditions agreed upon for a peaceful transition of authority, decided to proceed with conquering the city by force at daybreak, before the fog

had lifted. The order was given to the Soviet troops, made up of Cossacks, Turkomans, and other Soviet nationals from the southern plains of the Soviet Union and unaccustomed to the harsh climate of the North, to attack the city by crossing the frozen Lake Ladoga. No one in the Soviet command ever thought that the Finns would station a rearguard on the opposite shore. They were sure the city would fall without a single shot being fired. However, to their astonishment, they were met with gun and artillery fire, which cracked the ice behind the attackers. Most of the attacking troops drowned, and those that the icy waters did not swallow, froze to death.

Other episodes at this same time of the Finnish-Soviet hostilities, as related by Konstantinovich, showed the incompetence of the political advisers of the Soviet army, and the terror they instilled in career officers and in the troops who did not dare to oppose them even when manifest incompetence led to certain disaster.

Konstantinovich's stories were inexhaustible. The most recent, one which he had not read about nor heard about but had experienced himself, dealt with an order given by Stalin (after his return from the Teheran conference in 1945) that all Soviet military clubs and schools were to introduce dancing lessons into their curriculum because the officers who had accompanied Stalin to Teheran had not been up to the standards of Western etiquette at the reception ball given in honor of the Soviet delegation.

Konstantinovich mused, "The enemy is cursed! He makes you vicious and spoils you by making you imitate him. If you don't, you come off a loser. That's why we returned to the uniform and epaulettes of the Tsar. That's why we are steadily building up a communist bourgeoisie and our own intelligentsia. And when we get back on our feet, we'll get back to all the things which the reformers threw away by spilling blood!"

In cell number 14 there was also the Latvian Ionas. His father had been a pilot in free Latvia, after World War I, and had died in 1937 in an airplane crash. Ionas had been raised by an aunt, the only relative he still had in Latvia. In 1942 he had been deported to a forced-labor concentration camp in Germany, but he managed to escape. He was caught in Latvia and sent back to Germany a second time. For the second time he had managed to escape. He did not want to enlist in the German army nor work outside his beloved Latvia. He was caught a third time and again sent back to Germany, where after being

taken off the train, he had been handed over to custody of two German police officers, who were to take him back to the concentration camp. (This was in 1944.) While being taken by the two German officers, in another train, he heard that the Allies had landed in France. Now, he thought, good times were coming, and, at the first opportunity, he sneaked away from under the noses of the officers and ran westward. After reaching France, he managed to contact the French Resistance, which helped him get to Normandy, where, in July, 1944, he introduced himself to the American military authorities. He told them of his odyssey and expressed his desire to be admitted as a soldier to the American army. By mere chance there was an American major of Latvian descent there, who happened to know the fugitive's father. Upon the insistence and recommendation of this major, Ionas was accepted in the American ground troops. In 1945 he was still in the American occupation army in Germany, and after the war was offered a contract with the U. N. R. A., with the rank of sergeant. He was stationed in Frankfurt am Main, at that time a big business center in whose daily life he got caught up. He had plenty of money, a good position. In other words, he had everything he wanted.

Suddenly, by his account, he felt a yearning homesickness for his aunt, for Latvia, and for the people of his childhood; or maybe he was just fed up with too much good living! One can never know! Since he had no other recourse than to ask for help from the Soviet Repatriation Commission in Frankfurt, he asked for a vacation from his military unit, thinking he would return. He bought different items for his aunt and friends and, taking his official papers issued by the Soviet Repatriation Commission, he crossed into the Soviet zone. Here he was arrested on the spot and taken to the Mecklenburg Camp, supposedly a repatriation camp.

"Right now, as I stand here, I ask myself," said Ionas, "why was I taken to a repatriation camp? All my papers were in order. I did not do anything wrong, and I didn't get drunk and lose myself so I could not reach home by myself! Why don't these people let you go by yourself to the place for which they themselves gave you permission to visit? What is going through their stupid minds?"

His questions were asked in vain, and instead of an answer, even the next day, he was taken under escort to a K. G. B. center, where, without any explanation, he was declared a traitor to the country and sentenced on the spot to ten years. Right now he

was here, in Potsdam. Why? Traitor to his country? Whose country? Whose?

Another who passed through cell 14 was Michel, nicknamed Ahasverus, a Jew from Minsk, who knew Major Hirsch Gorin and from whom I got Gorin's address (the address which I have mentioned so often). He knew what he was talking about because his uncle was a prosecutor in Minsk. But Gorin, though an old friend of Michel's uncle, pretended not to know him. Good comedian, this Gorin!

Michel had been a soldier in the Soviet troops which had entered Dresden. To be more precise, according to his story, he belonged to the Soviet unit which occupied the Zwinger Museum. Michel's stories told of the ravages by the Soviet gunslingers. These soldiers would amuse themselves by aiming at the porcelain vases, chandeliers, or the more tempting statuettes. They enjoyed the clicking sound of crystal and fine porcelain fragments. Ahasverus was quickly discharged after the victory but managed to get rehired with the occupation forces as a specialist in fabrics. He was appointed manager in the southern part of the German Democratic Republic, where there were some big textile weaving works.

In 1947 ("the hell with this year," he used to say), after collecting a goodly fortune and providing himself with everything, Michel the Communist acquired 17 coffers filled with fabrics, food, and clothing, cigarettes and tobacco, some 40 or 50 huge pieces of winter salami, some natural and some artificially made honey, sugar, etc., to which he added 600,000 rubles and 200,000 marks in cash (according to what he told us). Business couldn't have been better!

Then he got himself papers for a return to Minsk. But — papers in order and comfortably seated in his train compartment and dreaming of future pleasures — he was arrested by two individuals in K. G. B. uniforms who took him to the "center" and from there, after a long bureaucratic procedure, he ended up here, where I found him at Nonnenkloster. Even now, after so many investigations and statements to the authorities, Ahasverus could not understand why they had arrested him for trying to run away to the West, they said, when both he and his 17 coffers had been in the Frankfurt an der Oder railroad station in the compartment of a car headed for Minsk. Why was he accused of high treason and fraudulent plotting to cross the border? "Because they found in my pocket the address of an uncle in America? So what? What Jew in this world does not have relatives in America? You name it, where?" he said.

Michel swore that it was true that he had an uncle in America, but he had never seen him in his entire life, and did not even write to him. He just happened to get the address from an aunt in Warsaw. He lamented, "I knew I had an uncle in America and that is all there was to it!"

The last specimen in cell 14 was Konstantinov — whom I mentioned before — from the southern part of Russia, twenty-five years old, out of which eleven years had been spent in concentration camps and prisons. He had known almost all the detention centers in the Soviet Union, and he could give you more information about any of these nooks of penitence and reeducation in that part of the world than any encyclopedia. He had felt the biting frost of Siberian and sub-Arctic winters, the horrors in the lives of these present-day convicts groping their ways beneath the foundations of the trumpeted "new and better life."

He had made his debut there when only twelve years old. Now he was serving time for the murder of a woman who also lived in that world. The war had caught him in a concentration camp for persons deported — as were all Soviet prisoners — to build a "new life." From there he, together with others, was enlisted in the Soviet People's Army and sent to the front. After reaching Poland, he had stolen a horse from the household of a Pole but had been caught, arrested, and sentenced again to another ten years, and sent to a reeducation camp. From there he had been sent to a fighting unit at the front, made up only of convicts who, though they were combat troops, were kept under guard. This unit had some very strange and original make-ups: the soldiers would guard themselves under the promise of the most horrible punishments and of the brightest hopes of rewards (including ultimate release). Here one could find the basest and meanest thieves, recruited from the convicts themselves and backed up by hateful political officers highly trusted by the Soviet authorities.

In such a heterogenous battalion, Konstantinov had reached what is today the so-called German Democratic Republic. Together with others, as he would tell us, looking very amused, he joined a gang that "blessed" the occupied German territories with overnight, unexpected "visits" into private homes. All kinds of burglaries and thefts, depending upon circumstances, brought them whatever they could lay their hands on. What was stolen was never taken back into the barracks but sold to different "hostesses" for money, which was easier to store and more

handy in order to make their lives more pleasant.

One of Konstantinov's "hostesses" was a rather elderly German lady (he called her "my old lady"), well built, heavy set. She looked exactly as he wanted a woman to look: with "plenty of meat and good to work on." With this woman, who lived alone and was "past middle age," Konstantinov kept his money reserves, or, when he returned empty-handed or with very few goodies from his overnight escapades, an "open credit," as he called it. After his unlucky forays, he would go to the German lady to find comfort and especially a good, strong drink — always his great weakness. On those occasions he would keep on drinking, in the Russian way, drowning the desolation in his soul. Indeed, he would drink heavily.

One day he sneaked out of the barracks all by himself and after a few raids (which did not bring any loot), followed by a few drinks to forget his lack of success, he got drunk and stopped by the old lady's. He was feasted by her and also given something to drink, in spite of the fact he had already had a lot to drink, but not as much as he wanted. Upon his insistence on drinking, the old lady proceeded to offer advice; and, in order to cool him off, she took out a bottle with only a little liquor in it. Dissatisfied, Konstantinov got up from the table and began to search for liquor himself. The old lady pushed him. He saw red. To be pushed by a woman? He, a bear of a man? To be pushed by a fascist beast? In one quick moment he grabbed the bottle and hit the old lady over the head with it, until she fell down like a rag. Blood poured out of her head . . .

He had left her there and continued to search the house. He finally found some liquor, and drank and drank . . . He could not say for how long, but he drank until he felt good. He drank until he did not know what was around him . . . To forget everything . . . Then he wanted to leave. He remembered that he had stumbled over the old lady who was lying on the floor, a rattle in her throat. He gave her a few kicks on her soft parts. Then he suddenly remembered that he had seen, somewhere around the house, an axe. He looked it up, found it, and went back into the kitchen to finish off the old lady. But the lady had come to and was crawling, trying to get out into the corridor.

"I got mad and, I don't know why, chopped her head off with the axe. That was all! One fascist less in the world!" Konstantinov said. "Since I had started the whole thing, I had to finish it," he said to himself. So he began to turn the old lady's house upside down and to take whatever good things he

could find: three suits and a few shabby clothes, which he wrapped up in a bundle. Then he took the bundle and the axe and left, leaving behind a big mess as if the house had burned down. He cut straight through the field near the house. He dropped the axe among some weeds and then went straight to the barracks, sneaking inside.

"A few weeks later," Konstantinov continued, "the devil made me heat up over a game of faro, another pastime among us Russians, and I lost all my money and one of the suits I had grabbed from the old lady's house. I almost forgot about the old lady, although several times the German police came and asked questions of our command. Well, even if our command had known something, it would have been kept a secret. As a matter of fact, the inquiries proved that on that particular day no passes had been given to anyone in our barracks. As a result, the whole matter was dropped.

"One day, my pal, who had won from me at the game of faro, went to the market place. It was on a Sunday, and he felt like taking a walk. He put on the suit he had won from me, and one of the old lady's relatives, who came across him by pure chance, recognized the suit. Some very unpleasant things followed, first with the local police, and then with the Soviet command. From my pal, of course, the leads went straight to me. What could I deny? So I told the political officer as they had taught me. Didn't we spend a lot of time and money to destroy the fascists? Now you have one less fascist against the Soviet people. Why so much fuss? I killed her!"

However, it seems that the Soviet courts did not take seriously either Konstantinov's logic or his conclusions, patterned on Soviet political indoctrination lessons; and they charged him with murder while drunk. They also established that he had a previous record for murder, and sent him to Nonnenkloster in Potsdam.

From his experience and knowledge of the penal code, Konstantinov figured out that they could not keep him there for more than ten years. For the time being he was waiting here in cell number 14, without having yet been sentenced, because they could not find the corpus delicti. In any case, it was a mere formality, and he was bored. Konstantinov, the rascal, the classic vagabond, disliked that killing heat of the summer of 1947. Finally, fed up with being detained and questioned (besides the transfer period from one prison to another, detention and questioning make up one of the most difficult periods in the life of

the detained, the deported, and the imprisoned in the U. S. S. R.), Konstantinov asked for an interview with Hirsch Gorin, after making much ado and talking a lot of nonsense for days in a row.

In spite of the fact that he had told us what he was going to do during the interview and how it would end, nobody in cell 14 (we did not have his rich experience in these matters), believed him. But it happened as he predicted. When he finally got to Gorin's office, he began to act crazy: He turned Gorin's desk over, broke his chair and with one of the broken pieces smashed to bits the chandelier and the window panes. In other words, until the guard came, he made a mess of Gorin's office. However, he did not touch Gorin himself, who, taken aback by this fit of madness and caught completely off guard, stood there dumbfounded.

When Konstantinov returned to the cell, he described the whole feat slyly, in colorful language. He especially made fun of the fear shown by the "Jewish midget," as he called him, when the pieces of crystal from the chandelier or the papers from the files began to fly around him.

In twenty-four hours, Konstantinov was listening to his sentence, condemning him to prison for exactly ten years. This scoundrel had experience, indeed! He *knew* well all the procedures, since whatever he had told us turned out exactly as he said.

As long as I stayed in cell 3, in the basement, I was alone. I got used then to my solitary way of life. There my heart broke whenever I felt the cage around me. Men in prison sometimes have strange feelings. Deprived of the holy sense of right and of the only great rich possession in life, freedom, the prisoner acquires a new sensibility and a different perspective. He wavers, often violently, between extremes. Everything annoys him, draws and retains his attention. But time also brings dullness, calm, peace, or, if you will, submissiveness.

The prisoner lives moments when nothing bothers and nothing attracts him. This is the calm of helplessness, the calm of the tiger in the cage, overwhelmed by nostalgia for the jungle and freedom. However strange it might seem, out of this calm springs also the strength of impassiveness and cynicism, which is the most abhorrent form of degradation of feeling. Anxiety, abstraction in all its bizarre forms, suicide, bestiality — and supreme wisdom, all spring from this calmness. They all are a function of the moral nature of each individual. In prison you will find great

scoundrels, disgusting criminals — and also the angels, the ascetics.

In prison, the struggle with yourself, the temptations around you that make your desires more bitter, make any master more intolerable. The fight with your thoughts, your dreams, your doubts, your preoccupations becomes more complex and blurred. Detention eats away at your soul, like a flowing stream eroding its banks. Prison refines you, destroys you, or steadily poisons you.

You arrive at moments when you cannot get along with anyone. Others do not understand you, and you do not understand them. In its mad pursuit of riches and happiness, mankind tramples over its fellows whom chance, weakness, passion, or virtue have thrown in its way.

Man crushes his neighbor, removing him from life's pale and placing him into the torpor of prison. Arghezi — that well known Romanian poet — once said: "Some are punished for a theft, others for a dream . . . "

Sometimes, regardless of what you do — whether you side with justice against evil, or with evil against justice — you end up being punished.

The energy in some persons ebbs and perishes. Shackles generate fatigue and indifference, torment, and useless suffering — and sometimes revolt and revenge. But revolt for what purpose? The benefit of mankind? What do we mean by "mankind"? Mankind is those individuals who — at a certain point in their lives — grab the bigger chunk and then must account for it when people point them out as wolves in sheep's skins.

Philosophical obscurantism! Political obscurantism! Intolerance! These are the old sins of mankind, recurring with the same intensity and inhumanity! History has been of no help to anyone: the wise man or the fool, the rich man or the poor man. All are equally greedy, ambitious, always blind to the most necessary and elementary laws for cohabitation. They will always take the same old roads.

The subsequent rule by those who were formerly slaves and serfs did not bring about anything better than the rule of the slaves' former masters or of their feudal lords. The bourgeoisie brought a redistribution of goods, yes — maybe better, maybe worse. However, the proletarians produced the cruelest farce! Who now oppresses mankind more cruelly than the so-called oppressed — or rather those who claim to represent the oppressed? If this knavery is the final historical necessity, a moral necessity

in the everlasting series of human changes — first recorded in the doctrines of the ancient philosophers from Heraclitus to the Stoics, if this were the truth, that this is the final stage, it would be a terrible truth! An unimaginable futility of human existence! An unimaginable waste of human resources! An immense loss! A poison without an antidote! Is this the "last stage in the development of mankind" — the Soviet stage?

. . . . . .

Though slowly, time passed by! I looked back at everything that had happened, at the unbelievable ebb in my existence. I was now only twenty-one years old. The artificial light of the bulb did not bother me any more. Everything settled into a routine. I started to kill time the way an animal kills time, enduring a life imposed upon me. This too was a way of living! The interrogations, which became more and more frequent, and especially Gorin's treatment of me, became intervals between my body functions and broke the monotony of time . . . Then came cell number 14. The new characters, a new variety of events, the arrival of some persons and the departure of others were all a change. It was a different way of life. Something more exciting! A way of life! But what is life? I discovered so many ways of life that I could no longer identify real life! For each individual a unique, vivid life. In each imprisoned life there, from the initial chaos, from the bewilderment at the outset, there sprang up a new accommodation. What happened in this new space was a new direction that in turn also became natural, normal . . . . although normal in a way other than the one we are accustomed to on the outside. A way different from the "natural" way; nevertheless, still a way of life . . . Even the insane have their own special way of life, measured only by insane terms.

As long as I was a soldier, I did not like, I did not allow any one to be my master. The discipline to which I submitted did not destroy that independence, or impose any true restraint or humiliation upon me. "This is normal life," I then said to myself. But it was the accommodation of the fool in me, the fool that I was at that time. Only today, as I think back, I realize that even then, caught up in that lively existence — though not confined inside walls and behind latches — I really had but a poor illusion of freedom. The bars and restraints had only been skillfully disguised by jugglers, by architects of social "welfare" who waved before my eyes beliefs, ideals . . .

From that so-called "normal" way of life, I now understood more clearly the slavery and the helplessness in which man struggles, like the insect inside the locked window — a toil like that of the mythical Sisyphus — a toil which clearsighted antiquity (and without too many scholars or expensive academies) had perceived in the essence of things and expressed in the simple and meaningful tale of Sisyphus.

Here, in cell 14, where I really began to live, I could read the souls of men as if they were lined in the palms of my hands. Some persons (about whom I had found out, or at least thought I had found out everything) left. Others kept coming, shrouded in their mysteries . . . To be able to look at a man's soul as if it were in the palm of your hand! To be so crowded together that no matter how much you did not want to see your neighbors, you ended up knowing them all in all their kinds of behaviors, all their kinds of movements, with all their subtleties. To get to know how any one of them would behave under a specific circumstance! How this one sips his hot soup, how that one cries with hunger after sipping that soup in his bowl, how that other one chews the tiny piece of bread to get the feeling that it will last longer, tormenting himself by thinking of putting aside a remainder for later, when no one else can nibble at it, thinking that it is there for real, to be kept for late in the middle of the night tempting the hunger-sensitized nostrils of all the others . . .

OUR DAILY BREAD . . .

That bread — brown, moist, heavy as stone and sour but still "bread." . . . Our daily bread! What painful experience of mankind led to the wording in this prayer — so simple and so shaking? . . . Our daily bread! The repeated shifts within the cell, often unexpectedly and apparently without reason, made it possible to avoid many irritating persons, to avoid many of the automatic reactions to neighbors who, at certain times, were unbearable, almost driving you to madness.

Sometimes, however, within that grayish uniformity of these fauna within that cell, one could come across some special characters — colossal personalities who disclosed the greatness of man, too. This happened very seldom, indeed . . . But the greatness was there, and it obscured all the filth huddling there quietly in the shadows.

The small fry, the multitude, would annoy with the meanness of their preoccupations. Whenever you had the bad luck to be

surrounded only by them, who knew nothing about themselves, and even less about you and your thoughts — you were not in the mood to exchange a single word. At that point debasement set in; a latent death began. Under such circumstances, I am not sure anyone can keep his sanity, or even whether he can remain a human being. In spite of the fact that all in that cell were over twenty years of age, they behaved like children — children who resemble monkeys rather than human beings. But there was nothing left of childish naivete or childish amazement when facing a first understanding of things. Lacking any higher preoccupations, void of any inner mirth, these individuals seek escape in anything — feverishly and with much fantasy. In the end, they succeed in creating occupation out of nothing. Sometimes the level of their activities and their joys is very high; at other times it is vague, or even disgusting or vulgar. Everything depends on that one person who establishes authority in the cell, who manages to capture the curiosity or to satisfy the momentary needs of these lesser fry. Of course, there is an up and down, like the movements of the stock exchange.

The language of communication was interesting. It was very mixed up, and the influence of nationalities was noticeable. Usually, in this modern Babylon, the language spoken was a very broken German, mixed in with very broken French, English, and Russian. Even those who had mastered any of these languages perfectly felt the urge to alter it — sometimes even with pride — so as to mangle it as beautifully as possible, exactly as young mothers do when they talk to their babies.

In cell 14 I witnessed different levels of discussion. Sometimes the level was very high. When one person told very interesting things, there were comments about works of art or literature, or there were critical lectures in every domain in which human beings have been involved: science, sports, politics, music, history. Sometimes, however, the overpowering level was low and vulgar, and most of the inmates did not care to listen to anything but the tales and pranks of that rascal Konstantinov.

THE POLITICAL ANIMAL

What a bizarre hodge-podge produced here by the K. G. B.! The basest thieves and criminals were mindlessly classified as political prisoners. Any convict or any vagabond — by the strange and hidden reasoning of the K. G. B. — was declared a political prisoner. Sometimes by simply cursing a policeman, or carrying a rusty firearm or a knife whose blade exceeded a certain length! All were political prisoners! Nothing in the whole world justifies more readily Aristotle's remark that "Man is a political animal" than Soviet prisons. Yes, man is a political animal. And because he is a political animal, because he has the right and the duty to take part in all the cares of his city, to openly express his ideas and to fight for the betterment of himself and his community, the Soviets have concluded that man must be locked up in prison.

In the city of the ancients, after a big political settling of accounts, the community deprived of their citizenship those who had remained neutral or who had abstained — considering them uninterested in the welfare of the people and therefore unworthy sons.

Democracies and democracies! . . . Ways of life and . . . ways of life! The least advanced people of antiquity, and the most advanced, progressive-minded people of today's democracies! With the help of this mob — noisy, always rebellious but receptive to the tiny rewards dangled before them by the K. G. B. — the Soviets could win any game, get any information, and could maneuver so as to fuel any enmity, any spiritual discord among their prisoners.

In exchange for nothing more than toleration of their whims and animalistic outbursts, or in exchange for some minute disgusting privilege, the K. G. B. managed to control and manipulate its immense multitude of prisoners. It was able to read the mind and paralyze the will of any protestor — in the world of the prisoners or in the outside world of those 250,000,000 so-called "free" citizens of the Soviet Union.

Reprisals were immediate: corporal punishments, starvation, loss of privileges, deportation — awful transportation during wintertime under conditions that could wreck even a bull.

Because of all these, even today, I think that the scoundrel Konstantinov — through all the liberties he took without provoking too heavy punishments — was one of those in the service of the K. G. B. Smart enough to turn adversity to his advantage, he was undoubtedly lying to both sides, selling his help only as much as it would help him stay afloat without losing credit with the officials, whom he nevertheless mocked, but only as far as his mockery would be tolerated (since he was a secret provocateur).

Perhaps Michel Ahasverus, the Jew from Minsk, belonged in that same category! Perhaps Ionas, too! Perhaps, even myself. Everyone could have been under suspicion. Circumstances taught

me to be very suspicious of anyone! Everyone feared everyone else who was present, and those present feared and suspected everyone else. Nobody trusted anyone. This is the cornerstone and foundation of the biggest police state in history. The horseback couriers on the roads that linked Darius' satrapies are fairy tale fantasies. Nothing can match the present, even if we allow for the exaggerations built up over the centuries. The Soviet evil surpasses all atrocities of the ancient satraps . . .

EXPERIENCES . . . COJOCEA, THE GUITARIST

Along the road of these sad experiences, the people I met proved to be unequally endowed and unexpected in their behaviors. Men covered with honors — awards, privileges — ministers or fieldmarshals, all turned out to be nothing but raggedness and rottenness, ready to betray, selling their subordinates in the most disgusting manner, while simple folk who did not have anything to defend except their own dignities, behaved like moral giants! What should we say? Some of those who are eminent in government circles, don their mantles whenever the wind blows from any direction; while others, sparsely clad, always face the hurricane. Well hidden in the depths of our own beings, the scoundrel and the knave pop out, but you can never tell in whom and where: in Fieldmarshal von Paulus; in General Budis, Romania's former military attache in Sofia, Bulgaria; or in the guitarist Cojocea, who came from Focsani. Poor Cojocea! Yes, Fieldmarshal von Paulus and General Budis, you must know that Cojocea, the guitar player, died because *he* refused to sing when, as a prisoner in Camp 7074, he was ordered to sing the communist *International*. *He* did not surrender a whole army. Nor did he give lectures on strategy to the enemy. Nor did he let himself be taken around through camps to spout communist propaganda, or to give statements against other prisoners.

The guitarist Cojocea did not behave like your excellencies von Paulus and Budis, who as prisoners would go hunting with their Russian captors (just as if they were still in their own countries)! Was this the price for Nuremberg? Was this the reward for General Budis' treason? Was this the reward for his lectures on strategy against his own people? A better living? I cannot but recall the name of the victor at Tsushima — the Japanese Admiral Togo, who could not bear to survive his sailors who had died in the depths of the ocean while performing their duties. He persistently asked permission to die alongside those who had fallen and who had believed in him, in their country.

But the honor of samurai did not belong to von Paulus. It belonged to this modest guitar player by the name of Cojocea. We should pay our respects to this humble and unimportant soldier born somewhere in the region of Vrancea in Romania.

People are so different! After being taken prisoner, General Budis — former commander of the Romanian Royal Guard, former military attache, signatory to an anticommunist book, *The Red Beasts*, published before World War II (an act that had given him prestige among his then admirers), had gone over into the camp of those he had once labeled "red beasts" in capital letters, had retained his rank of general and returned, with the enemy army, against those same people who had made him important. He would also eventually become president of the military tribunal that would pass judgment on those prisoners of war brought back from the U. S. S. R. into the new communist Romania; and then, after doing his "duty," he would get the usual Soviet kick in the hindside. This also was the fate of those other Romanian turncoat politicians, Tatarascu, Cambrea, and others.

Strange metamorphoses! Cambrea was formerly a teacher, an educator, and a professor to several generations of Romanian officers. Among his lectures had been one in which he had emphasized how a soldier should conduct himself if he should be unlucky enough to fall into enemy hands. This Cambrea, covered with honors, a man to whom the guitar player and others like him looked with hope and trust, was nothing more than a whore among whores, a whore who willfully and maliciously replaced the diplomat with the scoundrel, substituted fear and desire for personal gain for national interests!

FROM CELL 14

. . . But let the dead stay with the dead, and let us return to the scoundrels. Let us take, for instance, the Jew from Minsk, Michel Ahasverus, who by trading fabrics in the Soviet zone managed to acquire seventeen coffers filled with goods which he had come to possess through his industry and which he intended for the "reconstruction of the Soviet motherland." Though he had the proper papers in order and was seated in the train car for Minsk, he was arrested and charged with attempting to cross the border into the West. His pleas were in

vain, because no Soviet official would believe him. To them he was a traitor and an American spy. As for the other prisoners in cell 14, none of them believed him either. How could one load into the train car seventeen coffers, especially when he said that there were fifty big salamis in them. However, after repeated insistence and arguments with the guard and with Gorin, they allowed him to remove the spoiled part and we, his fellow detainees (because of what we now saw with our own eyes), found that he had been speaking the truth. He drew out seven or eight long pieces of salami and a few boxes with artificial honey, from which he gave each of us a bit so as to kill our appetites.

"That's not enough, brother Ahasverus!" Konstantinov leaped on him and snatched the salami and honey from him. "Your sense of justice is exactly like that of your uncle, the prosecutor from Minsk! And then Konstantinov proceeded to dole out the food himself, according to the law of vagabonds: the salami was broken into equal pieces and the honey dealt out with the help of the only teaspoon in the cell. Everyone got his share in his outstretched palm, until nothing was left.

Ahasverus, baffled, looked on as his goodies were divided up, goodies for which he had fought so hard. He looked at the honey which dripped out between the fingers of his outstretched hand. It wasn't an issue any more, since he had to hurry to lick the honey before it was gone.

Afterwards they all laughed: at Ahasverus, at the way the goodies had been distributed, at the honey-flavored salami, at the all-too-soon "effects" of the honey.

And because Michel threw all the thunderbolts of the sky at us, and all the curses, most of us, fearful of Gorin's whip, calmed down, except for Konstantinov, upon whom the Jew's threats had no effect whatsoever. Konstantinov shouted:

"You sinner! Moses punished you because you amassed all this celestial manna for the morrow. But what did he advise you Jews in the desert? And whom do you think you were threatening, you scumbag! Did you think you could get away with it, as in the old times when you were a big man in the fabrics industry? What could you do with so many coffers? Don't you think that food gets spoiled? Well, let me tell you that I don't care for you. If you continue to play the fool with me and squeal on me, tomorrow night or whenever I get my best chance, I'll slit your throat. Slash! Don't tell me that I didn't warn you! There will be one less cur in this world!"

Michel was smart enough to quiet down, like any sensible man

when being talked to like that. Personal experience had taught him that God takes care of those who take care of themselves, and that right is on the side of those who have the power at the moment. Before he could ask Gorin for help, this hulk of a man would break his bones.

The fun, together with the sharing of the salami and honey, was a rather minor and insignificant event, but, as it happens with children, the pouring of honey into one's hands grew out of proportion in importance, and its memory lasted for a very long time, bringing some life into an otherwise grayish monotony in the days which followed.

Most of the pranks were Konstantinov's kind of fun. Among them was one played on a soldier who had been on guard in the corridor next to our cell. It was a petty prank and in bad taste, but it was exactly the kind of prank that this small, ugly, evil Turkmenian guard — who had made our days bitter for us — asked for. He was the worst of our petty tyrants, carried away, like the others, by the frenzy of power. We were the last threads of a bolt around which the nut — manipulated by Gorin, Zelenin, and all the Soviet political superstructure — had been tightening up.

I could not find out and I cannot imagine what built up so much hatred in this Turkmenian monster against people behind bars. His own ugliness? The narrowness of a mind distorted by brainwashing? As far as the Russian language was concerned, he would mutilate it worse than even I, who, around those who could really speak Russian, could hardly express myself and who could manage to put together only a few words.

Konstantinov, the uncrowned king of the prison, together with Ionas, the Latvian (who longed to see again his native country and his aunt) — a person always ready to play tricks, always ready to defy authority — declared a ruthless war on the Turkoman. Needless to add that both Konstantinov and Ionas spoke both slang and academic Russian.

The fuss started from smoking. Smoking was permitted in the cell but matches were not allowed. We knew that the soldiers on guard had been ordered to light our cigarettes whenever we asked by lifting the panel on the cell window. Some of the soldiers on guard would pretend not to hear us, or if they heard us, they were hard to convince into lighting our cigarettes. Among these was the Turkoman. He was the most tyrannical of these little tyrants.

As to smoking — to be sure we did not always get what we

needed. When, for instance, we had *mahorka*, we did not have the pieces of newspaper, or vice versa. Now, *mahorka* is a kind of Russian tobacco, a jaguar within the cat family. It "cleanses" your lungs, and it could be wrapped up tightly in a piece of news-sheet or in a thin cigarette leaf as well. The smoke and the taste of the newsprint, combined with the ink and lead of the printed lies of the Soviet newspaper sweetens the bitter taste of the crushed, unfermented *mahorka*.

From a dearth in our supplies we would be saved either by the arrival of newcomers or individuals just taken in for questioning who, without any hesitation or shame, would ask their interrogators for the needed supplies. In their turn, the interrogators would sometimes close their eyes and pass on a few cigarettes, a fistful of *mahorka*, or a piece of newspaper. You had to have no shame (even the most mannered of prisoners soon learned that) when the person who was questioning you offered you (if he happened to be in a good mood) the pack to pick out a cigarette or some tobacco leaves to make one. The best thing for you to do was to grab everything and hide it in your pockets. Out of sheer etiquette, you could leave at most one or two cigarettes in the pack so as not to return it empty.

Whenever the Turkoman was on guard, we would tease him by knocking on the door and asking for matches or something else. It did not matter whether we really did need them. We knew that he was not going to give it to us anyway. We also knew that he would get mad and curse us. But this did not mean anything to us as long as we could laugh at his fury! What further harm to us could have come from his curses?

By watching the Turkoman closely, Konstantinov and Ionas noticed that he would tiptoe close to the door, putting his ear against the panel of the peephole. Konstantinov decided to play a trick on him.

Speculating on Konstantinov's great ability to fart whenever he wanted to — either in rapid, violent, and short-lived outbursts, like a two-cylinder engine; or in one continuous and prolonged, ceaseless sound — Konstantinov and Ionas set up their plan of action. Konstantinov — unsurpassed in the art of intestinal gas expulsion control — was jubilant; and the fellow prisoners (debasing themselves to the lowest level of vulgarity) let themselves be drawn with pleasure into this plot, this pastime. They laughed a lot.

On the established day, Konstantinov stripped off all his clothes and stretched out on the floor on his stomach, approximately

at half the distance between the door and the common bed; and Ionas also stripped off his clothes and stood near him with a twisted piece of paper in his hand (twisted so as to burn more slowly), ready to light it with a match. They waited for the Turkoman to show up.

When they sensed that Sabaka — dog — (as we nicknamed him, after his favorite curse for us, "fascist sabak"), had stopped by our door and put his ear against it, Konstantinov began to discharge his intestinal gas in stormy, repeated rounds. When Sabaka quickly pulled aside the panel to see what was happening, Ionas — with the dexterity of a juggler — struck the match and lit the twisted piece of paper, which he then stretched out in front of Konstantinov's stream of gas. (All of those present were convinced that the sulphuric hydrogen coming out of the stomach is combustible and explosive.) An explosion with sparks of yellow-greenish color curled up and down like a foxtail towards the opening in the door. Stunned by this new kind of rocket, the Turkoman quickly pulled shut the panel and ran through the corridor shouting, "Explosion! The fascists! Sabaka! Explosion! Sabaka!"

In a few seconds our cell was filled with Soviet officers and soldiers. They began a thorough search and began questioning us, but found nothing.

In his broken Russian, the Turkoman was adamant: "Big smoke . . . Flames big too . . . Must make big search . . . These are fascist devils! Fascist hydra . . . "

But our answer was always the same and took the form of a complaint against the Turkoman, who had not missed any chance to torment us and frame us with his fantasies.

"He just doesn't want to light even one cigarette, in spite of your order," Konstantinov told them, looking at the officers.

What the inquiry commission made of the whole thing or how much they understood, we never found out; but, in any case, nothing happened to the Turkoman. And, acting out of spite, he began to harm us as much as he could. It seemed that our complaints against him only fortified his position even more with the authorities as a reliable person. So the Turkoman, feeling the master of the situation, became an informer. He extended his spying upon other soldiers and supplied the authorities information that was not always true concerning the behavior of the other soldiers towards the prisoners. One of the soldiers on guard in our corridor, a kind-hearted, good-natured Ukrainian who was later removed from guard duty, complained to us about

these new activities of the Turkoman. We felt the Ukrainian's absence immediately because whenever he passed by the cell window, he would wave at us, would give us what we asked for, or, even without our asking, toss in cigarettes or tobacco. We missed him especially because, during his shift, he would sing for us in a low voice, different arias from operas or comic operas.

As soon as his shift came, he would pass by the window and let us know that with this "change of government" we could go to bed, even though it was not yet bedtime. In case we heard him rattle his keys, we knew that we had to arise quickly. To make the story short, this Ukrainian was a person who sweetened our existence in his own limited way.

We learned about his absence, but it was only after his return that we found out that he had been under arrest for ten days because the Turkoman had told the political officer that the Ukrainian was fraternizing with the prisoners. This added fuel to the fire, and Konstantinov and Ionas vowed to think up something else to drive the Turkoman into a corner. Something had to be done, and as quickly as possible.

Ionas, an ideal partner for Konstantinov, had played many pranks so far. The one he played most often, the scratching with a tiny fishbone which could never be found, was to be used on this occasion too. Ionas' methods had produced good results so far.

After all, all the other means for getting tobacco or pieces of newspaper had now been exhausted. So Ionas scratched himself with the tiny fishbone until he got blood, which he then spread all over his body. Then he began to shout that he was dying. What followed was a theatrical farce, with shrieks and loud knockings on the door. We had found the weak spot in the K. G. B., and we began to exploit their fear of suicides in the cell.

The very day on which we decided to play this trick on the Turkoman, Ionas took off the band aid from one of his cuts and scratched even deeper into the cut until he managed to collect a spoonful of blood. After he hid the fishbone and undressed, he spread the blood all over his body and neck and lay down in full sight from the cell's window. The prisoners sensed that the Turkoman was near the door; Konstantinov began to roar, grabbing and shaking Ionas' neck as if he were trying to strangle him. Ionas played his part by letting his tongue stick out, by rattling his throat and rolling his eyes.

"What is this? What's going on, you dogs?" The Turkoman rushed to the cell window and pulled back the panel. Seeing all

that blood and the two prisoners fighting, he began to cry for help from the other guards. He pushed the alarm button, but instead of pushing the black button which would ring the alarm in the room of the officer in charge, he, most likely out of panic, hit the red button (or maybe he pushed both buttons at once). This undoubtedly was the reason for the piercing alarm sirens in the corridors and all over the prison. In a few moments the gates of all the corridors were opened. (At this point I should mention the fact that after the escape of two American soldiers who, after seizing a guard in the corridor and tying him up, had made their way out undetected and were never caught, the Soviets had put up gates at the end of each corridor, with the soldier on guard in each sector isolated and locked in.)

The soldiers and the officers assigned to guard the prisoners poured into the corridors, and in a few minutes, General Zelenin in person, accompanied by Major Gorin and other heads of different K. G. B. sections, came and our cell was soon opened.

According to prison custom, we all got up and turned towards the wall with our hands behind our backs. One of us was supposed to speak for the prisoners. This was supposedly the duty of a "chief," usually appointed by the authorities from among the prisoners. This time, however, the most experienced and impertinent among us had been delegated to take the risk and the responsibility of speaking for us to the authorities. Usually the chief was picked out from among the common criminals; but in this case we needed a smart salesman who could say exactly what was needed to abate the furor and to mislead. This time it was Konstantinov who spoke. Maybe because he was himself involved, maybe out of bravado, or maybe in order to inspire admiration from the other prisoners, he said to the general, "Citizen General, there are eighteen prisoners in cell 14. The food is good and nobody has any complaint. Everything is all right except that they do not want to give us a light when we want to smoke !"

"What happened?" General Zelenin and then Major Gorin inquired. But the artful dodger, Konstantinov, assumed the most innocent face in the world and looking straight into the eyes of the general, with an expression of puzzlement, asked the general what this was all about. He, Konstantinov, like the rest of us, was very curious to know what had happened and why the alarm had been sounded. Did a prisoner escape? Or was there a fire?

The Turkoman, who was also in the cell now, still confused,

tried to explain, but his barely intelligible blurting produced only the same words: "Dog cut throat . . . Hand at throat and he turn red . . . Blood come out and tongue stick out . . . Noise come out of throat as if he dead . . . "

Until they finally sent for a Turkmenian major lieutenant — also from the guard — to interpret, Konstantinov, with that same impudence, began to talk to General Zelenin, describing the Turkoman in the nicest possible terms, in vivid and colorful language: "This man worried our lives out, Citizen General, even worse than Citizen Major Gorin. He lies to us all the time. Yes, he lies both to us and to you. He accuses us sadistically of all his mongoloid fantasies. He is an agent provocateur worse than the priest Gapon, Citizen General. He went so far as to sound the alarm just to show you how vigilant he is, and so that he can punish us whenever he pleases — infuriating you, Citizen General! Ask everyone around here, ask the other guards, the officers on duty if they ever had any trouble with us! And convince yourself, since you are here, by turning this cell upside down to see what you can find! What blood is he talking about? Look at us, Citizen General! Where's that f _ _ _ _ _ _ blood? Maybe it's his own blood! Let him show us!"

While Konstantinov continued to talk very convincingly and indignantly, I must tell you that before the door of the cell was opened he had enough time to wash and wipe off Ionas' blood with the trunks he was wearing under his trousers.

The officers and the guards looked all over the place and since they could not find anything suspicious, they began to shrug their shoulders and look helplessly at the raised eyebrows of the thundering general.

The fact of the matter was that, since he was lying so blatantly and convincingly, even we who had witnessed what had happened could hardly tell who was the liar: Konstantinov or the Turkoman. We were left with the impression that Zelenin and Gorin had convinced themselves that the Turkoman was the author of a provocation for reasons which remained unknown. Those two, themselves great masters at all kinds of plots and hoaxes, bored with such kind of business, had been trapped in a web of their own kind of plotting.

Taking advantage of these moments of embarassment and confusion, with the most innocent look in the world, Konstantinov took a "scummy" out of his pocket (one of the cigars I had given him and which still had on it the stamp of the factory), bit off the end with his teeth and spit it sideways out of his mouth,

and then said to the general (who was only half as tall as Konstantinov), "Citizen General, because this scoundrel" — pointing to the Turkoman — "does not want to even light our cigarettes, please be so kind as to honor us with a match . . . "

Since the general smiled at Konstantinov, the rest of those present also smiled, and one of the officers accompanying the general — at a sign from the general — gave Konstantinov a box of matches.

Very tactfully, his face showing total indifference, Konstantinov took a match, lit his cigar, then poured all the contents of the box into the palm of his hand, and — with a bow — returned the empty box to its owner.

Such events filled up our days, giving them a coloring that was different from the usual one.

ARTICLE 206 AND THE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Around the beginning of August, the authorities started to call me in for questioning less often, and then more for the sake of seeing my face, since nothing happened. Finally, at one session they read and translated the contents of article 206 from the Soviet penal code. And they notified me that I had the right to read the contents of my file and make any additional statements to it or to request a review, provided I submitted to further questioning.

"The hell with it!" I said to myself. "That is just what I need now — after going through all the trials of hell, another questioning!"

But, recalling their lecture on article 206, I realized that in their reports they had never mentioned the money and objects taken from me. So I objected to the fact that they had not mentioned their appropriation of my personal belongings: a gold Omega wrist watch with the inscription "Nelu 5/29/26" on its back; a gold bracelet with the inscription "May 29, Paris, Jacqueline"; a "Diplomat" leather briefcase; a gold ring inscribed "J. et N. — 8/13/44, Paris"; another gold ring and a silver ring both inscribed "U. J. N."; as well as the following amounts of money — 300 Reichsmarks, 3,300 West German marks, 220 American dollars, 15,000 French francs, 600 Danish crowns, 2,000 Dutch guldens, and 200 Swiss francs. Where had all this money gone, I asked, since it had not been mentioned in any of their reports?

In their report dated 8/8/47 — as provided for by article 206 — a supplement to my file number 18012 (also attached later to the report of my trial at Vorkuta between September 13 and 18, 1953; and to my file number 9-R 21.27.6238 CBA 1-G-770), there was mention only of 303 German marks (but no mention whether these were East or West German marks) and one silver ring. Nothing else!

I asked Major Gorin then (and I ask now, since I am no longer under their jurisdiction of terror): Where are the rest of my belongings? Why did you not report in your inventory all the currency and all the personal objects made of gold? The listing of these valuables would have been strong support of their charge that I was a spy! If a spy, what would have been my reward? Beautiful eyes? I was no Mata Hari! A pack of bad tasting cigarettes and the 303 German marks recorded by you? Where was the rest of it?

At that time I asked that very question, but only I paid any attention to it. (They did not want to hear it.) Since then I have not been able to find anyone to answer that question. Not even at my trial on September 8 . . . (which I have described previously in detail in my account of Thea Meckel's trial). The Soviets investigated, charged me, deliberated, passed judgment on me, and, without giving me at least the chance for an official defense, informed me of my sentence — twenty-five years in prison.

The beauty of the whole thing was that, after the trial was over, we were taken from the courtroom to wait outside until they supposedly would decide on the verdict. What they had to deliberate about I do not know, but through the window pane of the room where we were waiting I could see how the secretary and a member of the jury played checkers (with twelve dark pebbles or beans and twelve light pebbles or beans). The rest were apparently telling jokes or kibitzing the checker game.

Wonderful session, terrible sentence! But the experience — I swear to God — compensated for the twenty years' sentence! I was so distraught that I did not notice — on my way back to prison — that they did not take me back to cell number 14 but to cell number 20, the cell of those now sentenced, a kind of transit cell pervaded by the most terrible chaos, a cell in which you could not find anything but promiscuity and triviality. In this cell even the fleas had lice!

From this cell number 20, two, or three, or four, or five persons would, in turns — or all at the same time — leave, in different directions: to punishment camps, to reeducation camps — death camps.

NEW CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN OLD CONCENTRATION CAMPS

After 1945, in the Soviet occupation zone — up to their old habits — the K. G. B. established four special camps for prisoners. These four camps had two sections each: one for those sentenced by the occupation military tribunals, and one for political internees. (Most of these were former members of the old National Socialist German Workers' Party.)

The four camps were set up in the old Nazi concentration camps — by now known to the whole world through press accounts and films for the crimes committed by the Nazis during the Third Reich. The new Soviet Camp Number 1 had been the notorious Sachsenhausen; Camp Number 2 had been Buchenwald; Camp Number 3 had formerly been the military prison Torgau; and Camp Number 4 had been Bautzen, also known as "Yellow Misery." From these special camps the Soviets transported the train loads of prisoners on their way to slavery, to the thousands of death camps in the huge Soviet empire.

One must not leave out mention of the special K. G. B. centers with their lesser but more severe authorities. These too, each in its own way, had their unique histories and their own special investigators. Those who died in these former and now converted concentration camps — yes, Nazi concentration camps turned Soviet — must not be forgotten any more than those who died there before 1945.

THE YELLOW MISERY

I was destined to leave this inferno on September 22, but only for another one — Special Camp Number 4 in Bautzen. "Special camp"! Why special camp? I do not know what "special" means. All I know is that it had been nicknamed "the Yellow Misery." The commander in charge was a colonel by the name of Kazakov. His name has stuck in my memory. Other names which I should not have forgotten have long since gone down the drain!

Here, at the Yellow Misery, I again met Thea Meckel, and until completion of the updating of our files and the filling out of the prison forms, I was able to talk to her. We had both been

found guilty and sentenced; but we had parted with the belief that neither of us had been responsible for the arrest of the other. The court proceedings and the events which followed had fully convinced us (and especially Thea, in whose heart suspicion had still lingered) of our innocence. When we parted this time I took off my scarf and wrapped it around her neck as a reminder of all the troubles we had gone through . . .

At the same time as my arrival at Bautzen, other trainloads also arrived: the "blessed ones" from Dresden, the "blessed ones" from Leipzig, the "blessed ones" from God knows where — all together in one grand mass of people. What then happened to each, it is hard to guess, but I and some twenty others were taken to the east wing, fifth floor, room 45, where we vegetated for three weeks.

Here, naturally, we encountered other prisoners, met other faces, heard other stories — a new way to kill time. I remember one German peasant, born right there in Bautzen, sentenced because he had slapped a "worker from the East" (from the Ukraine), whom he had hired as a farm worker. He had hit him because he had caught him selling something he had stolen from the German's household. I do not remember what it was that was stolen, but for the beating the peasant gave the worker, he had gotten exactly twenty-five years for "crimes against humanity." This peasant seemed the most unhappy specimen of humanity on earth. He had been locked up in a cell on the fifth floor for two years. From the cell's window he could look into his own backyard. Every morning he watched his children getting dressed and leaving for school, then he watched them returning home. He watched his wife working around the house. He saw the Christmas tree candles going on, twice. And his family did not have the slightest suspicion that he was watching them, a few yards away . . .

THE SAFETY PIN

Here in Bautzen I met a rare personality, a former interrogator of prisoners for the K. G. B. center in Bautzen. They said he had been the most dreadful of all the inquisitors that the prisoners had encountered. They spoke of him as a nightmare. But he too had been sentenced to twenty-five years after he also had been accused of spying for the United States. He was my bedfellow, sleeping right under me in the bunk below. As an interrogator,

he used to pick up all the papers of the newly transferred (from other prisons) and would question every prisoner in private with a severity which brought high respect and unusual trust from the very top in the K. G. B. In the most orthodox Soviet manner, he would question his prisoners to exhaustion: Who caught you? Where and how? Who turned you in and under what circumstances? And so on and so on . . . until he got to the most insignificant details, those details which, not being incriminating, could be extracted more easily because the prisoner under such questioning was all the more eager to comply, talking fast and about as many things as possible so as to make the interrogator miss the real target.

From such information gathered from different prisoners, this interrogator managed to discover links in a vast network of double agents — the so-called "safety pins" — who supplied information to both the East and the West, his discovery causing a great deal of damage to the world of spies, especially among the small fry who had by mere chance fallen into this net of information and misinformation. The game of exposing and unmasking these individuals who traded in human beings and information became his great obsession. So, to the K. G. B. he gave as much information as necessary to maintain his reputation with them, but gradually reducing it to the necessary minimum; the bulk of information he accumulated he kept for his own advantage.

When the K. G. B. center — intrigued by the accuracy of the news broadcast by radio R. I. A. S. from Berlin, news regarding the Soviet zone and even the internal problems of the K. G. B. or the statistics about prisoners in certain Soviet camps — was ordered to discover the network of informers, that task was assigned to this dreaded agent. However, subsequent enquiries did not produce anything, and radio R. I. A. S. continued to broadcast even the names of those who had died, plus news about the questionings each day.

Then the authorities began to suspect that there was an underground broadcasting station in the camp itself. They searched all over the place, but found nothing. Then a strange thing happened which could not pass unnoticed: Agents, misinformation agents, and even the "safety pins" and the smallest Soviet provocateurs in the West began to be caught, one by one. The suspicious Soviet counterintelligence now came to understand that there was someone in their midst who was betraying their secrets, because only someone who knew them very well could have made

possible the Western unmasking of the Soviet agents. Who could give out so much detailed information? Who had access to so much information? The entire K. G. B. center was put on alert and, working discreetly, managed to uncover and arrest this man, one of the most trusted men there: the "terror of the prisoners," this mealy-mouthed man now snoring in the bed beneath mine in room 45 on the fifth floor, former spy for the West and high ranking K. G. B. officer.

And while we are still dealing with authorities, I must mention that also here, held in the camp at Bautzen, was one of the most brutal guards in Bautzen, himself now arrested for theft and breaking in. He had been a celebrity, nicknamed "the Thug," but now was mild as a lamb. His former colleagues among the guards did him a favor: He was allowed to walk freely through the corridors, to do some cleaning, and to distribute food to the prisoners. Without a doubt he was an informer. However, we could not catch him red-handed. After a while he was given his own cell (I never understood why) with bed and sheets.

During one of our prolonged walks, this former guard, talking about himself, told us that in cell 3 of the east wing, a dentist had gone insane because he had beaten him up so badly. One of the whims of this dentist deranged by so many beatings was to eat his own feces. One day, in order to get a better taste, he asked the guard on duty to give him a little bit of salt. Out of sheer curiosity, the guard gave it to him. The deranged man spread the salt over his feces and ate his meal with great gusto.

"From that time on," the Thug confided to us, "I stopped beating anyone . . . He was my last victim !"

Also we learned from this guard, among other trivia, that a Ukrainian soldier serving outside the prison, together with another Ukrainian soldier serving inside the prison, had hanged himself after the news of their mothers' death in the great Ukrainian famine of 1946-1947.

THE NUMBER-ONE BEAST

The number-one beast of the Bautzen Prison was its head physician, Dr. Walter, himself a prisoner serving a sentence of twenty-five years. He was a business-oriented man and engaged in business practices even in prison. Other than business affairs, nothing made any sense to him, and nothing deserved any effort. He did business with the living and the dead. For him, anything could be

traded in: food, clothing, cigarettes, tobacco, medicine, gold crowns on the teeth from either the living or the dead, cures for any kind of disease, real or fake. Nobody could get any kind of medical assistance without passing through his "customs." He presided over the black market in the Bautzen Prison according to his own private moral code, driving hard bargains. I did not know then, and I do not know now what big shot in the K. G. B. was behind him, but it was inconceivable that the existing informant system could exist without Dr. Walter's business arrangements. It was only too clear that Dr. Walter was only a simple tool who paid for his position at Bautzen by doing exactly what he had been ordered to do. In exchange for his services, he got nothing more than food and exemption from the daily miseries, and, maybe, the ecstasy of power. The truth is that he did what he wanted. Mean power, a kind of stupid satisfaction — he had that !

A like-spirited man, collaborating with the head physician, was Merk, the medical student, from the region of Mecklenburg.

As a direct result of the innumerable "caresses" from Hirsch Gorin, I received a displacement of both kidneys and a continuous suppuration which I could not get rid of for several years. In Bautzen I was taken several times to the ambulatory hospital, but I had to be satisfied with vain hopes because they lacked the proper medication, even for themselves. My only chance was to get treatment at a regular hospital, and that had to be approved by a commission, whose findings had finally to be presented to the Soviet head physician, the last one to sign the admission papers.

The most difficult hurdle was to get to the commission, because you had to rely upon the head physician at the prison and upon his collaborators. And you could not get through them if you did not resort to bribery — in one way or another. I personally gave my rations of bread to get where I wanted to go. I was finally admitted to the hospital at the same time as a man from Berlin by the name of Hueppe. But Fate did not separate me from Merk. I would meet him later in the mine at Camp 7 at Vorkuta. There, in September, 1953, Merk would appear as a witness for the Soviet government against a strike committee in a trial in which I appeared as a defendant. (More about this in due time.) Anyway, the beast had not changed, and he will never change.

Now, regarding the head physician. He paid for the harm he did me. A day came. That inevitable day came, in its own peculiar way — unexpectedly. What actually happened no one knows.

But one day, that mountain of a man, that hulk which defied eternity, began to melt down. Melt little by little, from one day to another until — after just a month — that hulk disintegrated completely, and was no longer a hulk. He was nothing but skin and bones, and then he breathed his last there in Bautzen, the same place where he had abused and destroyed the best human beings . . . He could not run away from what he had feared most. His anxiety for his own welfare, his greed for a better life for himself, or perhaps his fear of death — anyway it delivered him into the hands of those who used him to profit from human misery, even took delight in it.

It seems that there is a justice somewhere after all, a justice which cannot be bought. Even he who considers himself strong and eternal cannot escape this world of helplessness to which he has been damned from birth and in which his vain glory is destroyed. Man is, indeed, a miserable insect . . .

Dr. Walter was not the only one! He was not unique! And Life did not produce just him at Bautzen. There are many others like him, everywhere. I met others who also considered themselves indestructible, and whose inner life also reflected only their outward brutish appearance.

THE SUGAR KING AND COMPANY

Another specimen at Bautzen was the reputed German Sugar King, who showed his true colors in the prison's graveyard. This fellow wanted to get out at the price of walking over the dead bodies of others.

He, too, believed that the rest of the Universe should perish if it meant he could stay alive! I do not recall his name, but those who want it need do nothing more than ask around for the name of the owner of the huge sugar refineries in the region of Halle. They will find out his name that way, for sure. In the prison, this millionaire industrialist discovered a lot of naive people to whom he promised big positions after he got out of prison. For a ration of bread he would offer handwritten, signed receipts for fifty kilograms of sugar deliverable at any of his storage houses, factories, or subsidiary firms. Naive and greedy, with these assurances for an uncertain tomorrow, these prisoners fell into his trap and parted with their daily loaves of bread in exchange for dreams of abundance tomorrow. This more practical industrialist seized the goodies today and spared no promises for

tomorrow. People are like that: some deeply entrenched in the concrete today, others still dreaming of the castles of tomorrow . .

Fate gave me the opportunity to meet such enterprising merchants wherever I went. One was a Christian Orthodox priest, another a landowner, another an attorney — in the Arctic Circle. These did not promise sugar. The priest and the landowner offered patches of land; and the attorney gave out, unsparingly, diplomatic positions (especially in the Orient and the Far East). You, my friend, Cristea, and you, Duta — wherever you might be — do you remember this unholy trinity? You were blessed by this "influential" attorney with a "plenipotentiary position in Cairo." And that scoundrel of a priest would sell, besides those patches of land — pages torn from his Bible (the sheets were thin and of good quality) to the smokers in exchange for their bread!

In the summer of 1955, some of those in Camp Number 11, at Iavas-Potma, were appointed to positions in the government by Lieutenant Colonel Toba — in prison! However, this time the "government posts" — diplomatic and administrative — were awarded only to friends of the so-called "rummy club" or to the ever ready meddlers. Later, between 1955 and 1956, when the so-called Romanian "war criminals" — the legionnaires and anti-Soviets — were sent back to Sovietized Romania from detention camps in the Soviet Union and permitted only to do manual labor or kept under house arrest, this Lieutenant Colonel Toba became a lecturer in military arts and professor of foreign languages, was decorated for distinguished service, and received the highly unusual passport to travel to the West. Can you guess why?

The crooks, though, paid for their sins sooner than they imagined, in spite of the fact that they managed to glut themselves. They were eventually liquidated, while the victims of their confidence games survived, even if they were not able to cash in on the promises made, and even though the documents had the ring of authentic last wills and testaments which supposedly would pass down to their heirs. Strange . . . people are strange!

There is, however, something good in all that! No matter how much and in what way we struggle, or no matter how many ambitions take hold of us, we all end up in the same place. Unfortunately, despite this simple truth of the equity of justice, no one seems ever to discern this truth! We continue to race after vain illusions, pushing each other aside like piglets dashing

for the udder of the sow called Life . . .

In Bautzen, as in all other places such as Tambov, Potma, Gorky, Vorkuta, Norilsk, Vladimir, Karaganda, Donbas, Omsk, Uhta, Bechetovka, Pechora, Kirov, Kotlas, Magnitogorsk, Vologda, and all along the Volga River, in camps whose names I no longer remember, there were mountains of the dead . . . . . .

Ion Stanescu, Boris Ostapov, Stefan Mengoni, Ion Toba, Franz Schmidt, and a Romanian from Bessarabia (from left to right) before repatriation to communist Romania. Iavas, October, 1956

Many dead . . . Dead of hunger, of misery, of typhoid fever. They filled deep, huge mass graves . . . Corpses stacked one on top of the other and covered with lime, filling ditches . . . All those who passed through those death camps once had names, and numbers, and records with horrifying details . . . But there are eyewitnesses who still live — in Italy, in Spain, in France,

in both Germanies, in Belgium, in the Netherlands and Denmark, in Hungary and Poland, in Finland and in all the Baltic countries, in Romania, in Korea and Japan, and all over Soviet Russia . . . But they keep silent! No one has the courage to start proceedings against the perpetrators. They are silent! They keep silent! Always silent. The victors would bury any new Nuremberg. They figure that a Nuremberg for the vanquished is enough . . . But we can still hope that not all of these eyewitnesses will die off . . . And maybe the day will come some time when — as a Romanian proverb says — we shall feast on our street . . .

I say this, not out of stupid passion, but if the Russian Auschwitzes had been talked about as much in the past forty years as that camp for which deserved punishments were meted out at Nuremberg, the world would know that the East, too, had its death camps and camps no less inhuman and where there are still victims who moan in despair. There, there are many dead — to be unearthed — dead for which mankind has not yet cried for revenge . . . Until that time comes, those dead, from everywhere, hundreds of thousands, millions of them, haunt us, the living, like a curse.

THUDS IN THE NIGHT

Here in Bautzen, many died, and their dead were also piled in stacks — stacks of people, not firewood. And the dead were carried out only at night, three times a week: on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Maybe the dead were romantic. After the suffocating cell, the strong, fresh night air (which they had not breathed for a long time) and the sparkling stars were undoubtedly better.

In the cell, as I vegetated, I distinctly heard the sinister heavy trodding on the asphalt of the road surrounding the eastern wing of the prison. It was the rascal assigned to this task, earning his daily ration of bread. This macabre, rhythmic thudding did not resemble, in any way, the joyful rhythms of a horse's hoofbeats out on a joyride. It was the knell of former human beings, of prisoners that had been crowded together in the cells of the east wing, where we, now stricken by the horror of death, started to shiver. Whose turn would it be next? The fear in our souls and the silence in our cells were waiting for an answer in the dead of the night. But there was no answer except for the rhythmic heavy footsteps of the rascal carrying his burden with

difficulty to the mass grave — dug by night and covered stealthily overnight by the victors in the war.

The next day, at daybreak, life would begin again as usual, and the trading resumed: bread for sugar, sugar and bread for cigarettes, cigarettes for clothing, and all these for the promise of acres of land or diplomatic posts . . . Terrible drive: hunger in a permanently empty stomach! Obsessing hunger! Psychic hunger springing from the painful emptiness of the belly; hunger which magnified everything to gigantic proportions: amplified desires, appetites, recollections (especially those of food), all burned the mind and darkened it.

TWO MIRACLES

Incredible as it may seem, in Bautzen, in a Soviet world, two miracles took place. In 1949, in the old chapel of this prison, a religious mass was officially held at Christmas time, and booklets with religious matter were distributed among the prisoners. Since there was not room enough in the chapel for all, the religious mass was held three or four times. Neither then nor now am I able to understand the leniency. For diplomatic reasons? Most likely, yes. What was the meaning of this masquerade? Whose purpose did it serve? In whose eyes were the Soviets throwing dust? In whose backyard were the Soviets placing this Trojan horse? Beware, not of Greeks, but of Soviets bearing gifts!

Anyway, whatever the reason, I still look upon the event as a miracle.

Another miracle was an escape by climbing down the wall (as in Casanova's adventures). In the same transfer of prisoners with me, there were two brothers from Koenigsberg, arrested somewhere in Mecklenburg. The older brother had been enrolled in the German paratroopers. After the war, in 1947, in order to overcome the hardships of life in the Soviet zone of Germany, the two brothers engineered break-ins into stores belonging to Soviet hospitals, using the underground sewers of the city. But, finally, their thefts caught up with them and they were caught while helping themselves to some food in one of the Soviet stores. For this they were hit with a twenty-year sentence and put into the same cell with me.

In two or three weeks after their arrival in Bautzen, we agreed to try to escape together. To do this we had to climb down from

the fourth floor, using twisted bed sheets tied together at the ends. After preliminary rehearsals, I realized that the bones in my left hand — broken for the second time by Major Hirsch Gorin — prevented me from going through with a performance such as this, and I finally gave up my plan to join them. The two brothers and four other prisoners went on but were caught by the inner security in the backyard. A new trial was set for them, followed by new sentences (accompanied, of course, with the supplementary ration of beatings). However, in 1949, the same two brothers, accompanied by two other prisoners, did manage to escape, in spite of the fact that they had to climb over an unusually high fence reinforced by barbed wire and an electric current. Their attempt was most successful — the only successful escape I knew about in Bautzen.

Special Camp Number 4 in Bautzen. The 5th window (from l. to r.) on the 4th floor is that of cell no 14 where the author was confined in 1947-48

As a building, Bautzen could have been made into a museum or a historical monument. However, it became a prison. On the third floor, in the west wing, there was a cell number 12, in which Ernst Thaelmann had been locked up. Looking like a museum room, the room (unfortunately) did not look now as it had during Ernst Thaelmann's detention. At that time, he had had his personal library, a radio set, a writing desk, a few chairs, and a bed with the best trappings.

But during my stay in Bautzen, between twenty-five and thirty souls vegetated in it, as in the other cells. Where was the library? The radio set? These are bourgeois stupidities! Today, not only in Bautzen but anywhere in Soviet prisons and camps, a sentenced man is written off in the Book of Life. There are two things one can get in those places: a little bit of bread and the chance to dream. This is all you can get: a crust of bread

and dreams.

But imprisonment and deprivation were not the only things which crushed you. There were other hardships: the monitors (both the supervisors and the informers among the prisoners) in the cells, in the halls, and the monitors over the floors, more tyrannical than the guild masters of the Middle Ages or the official guards.

Recruited from among the ranks of the common criminals there, and backed up by the Soviet authorities, these "bosses," men without God and without any law, represented the worst in the prison. These individuals — through some administrative stratagem — were imprisoned together with the political prisoners, to be used by the K. G. B. as tools, to inspire terror and distrust. Political detention, which resulted in the loss of certain privileges (even when the person detained was really only a common criminal) was a kind of threat held over the heads of these criminals in order to terrify them and force them to be Soviet hirelings. The simple promise to invalidate a certain provision of the law, followed by the granting of privileges (most of them illusory), turned these inmates into obedient lambs and faithful informers.

For instance, in cell number 6, where I stayed for a short while, the Soviets had appointed as monitor a prisoner from Berlin by the name of Walter. He had an artificial leg and was in fact a common thief on whom the Soviets had pinned the usual label of political prisoner. Walter had also been imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, where he was put in charge of a barrack by the Nazis. Scoundrels can be used by any decadent regime. What Walter did was only to change masters. Instead of the Gestapo, now the K. G. B. Some are probably destined to always rise to the top, in any regime or under any government! There were plenty of persons like Walter. He happened to be here at Bautzen. As in the Nazi concentration camp, Walter took his assignment seriously. More seriously than his masters required of him. If just one of the prisoners dared to complain about an alleged irregularity on the part of the Soviets, or to say that the food was insufficient or bad, or its distribution was unjust, he would get from Walter what even the K. G. B. did not dare do openly! This was exactly what the authorities wanted. And if he proved embarrassing, they could get rid of that tool any time! On the surface, the authorities never knew what was going on, and were always "surprised" at complaints: a theatrical performance from the top to the bottom. And if a situation required steps to be taken, the authorities would punish individual abuses; and

sometimes the entire leadership were questioned, brought to trial, and sentenced (which, in fact, changed nothing). Sometimes the whole administration of a camp or prison themselves became "tenants" of that particular camp or prison. But the Soviet system itself always came out clean. There were always stupid people to play their game, and on these people the K. G. B. staked its success. This is why it piously cultivated people like Walter, around whom would gather a whole gang of thugs, and over whose head it was more difficult for the prisoners to pass than over the heads of the retinue surrounding a crowned head.

In the same place where Walter reigned, there was the former chief of the former criminal investigation police unit from Berlin (also called the K. R. I. P. O.). What kind of person this former chief of police was in his higher days, I do not know, but here in prison he was very shy, and one would not suspect the policeman within him. Of course, experiencing the hell in which he now found himself would have been useful to him earlier, had he known it in advance. However, the experience helped him a lot now. From my experiences I have often found myself cursing a rashness in me, a rashness which often kept me from profiting from the knowledge I had acquired in my hell. Strange forgetfulness — or blindness of the moment — with sad consequences. Not to learn the lesson, not to forget all you had read, all you had learned from the experiences of others, and — worst of all — from the experiences you had paid for with your own blood!

I remembered this chief of police two years later, at the time I was sent to the Arctic Circle. There I came across a thug, to whom nothing was sacred, who passed through many Soviet prisons and bragged about his 78 murders as if they had been 78 victories. I recall one of the murders about which he bragged most: He had chopped off the head of a former courier who was also a prisoner, and presented it in person to the camp commander — on a wooden plate with the ration of boiled cabbage for that day.

"Citizen Colonel, here is the head of a son of a bitch, served with cabbage!"

This criminal whom I met in the Arctic Circle surpassed by far the crimes of the notorious Bluebeard, about whom this chief of police from Berlin liked to tell us in gory detail.

On the premises of the Bautzen Prison there were, in isolated barracks, a few members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the so-called political suspects, considered very dangerous to the "democratic" state and who, though im-

prisoned, threatened us with unintelligible shouts and booed us as soon as they saw us. Very soon we found out the secret of their attitude: They had been incited by Soviet political officers who had explained to them that they were being detained without trial and sentencing because of us, who were working for the United States of America.

Also in Bautzen, there were war criminals from among the German civilian police and military police. Without any selectivity, any questioning, or any sentencing, all had been considered war criminals. There had been no evidence and no complaints against them, but the Soviet government thought it better to keep them locked up for "democracy's sake."

From these "war criminals" I learned a few facts which were very interesting and a lot about Soviet logic. There is no doubt the press exploited them, especially the Soviet press, the press of the "new times," a press that fished in troubled waters.

A WHOLE BATTALION

Here is one example. In Bautzen, a wretched convoy of men in rags, dirty, and stooped with pain and starvation, came in. We were there and saw them dying. It was a whole battalion from the former German country police. (Many refugees from countries occupied by the Soviet Union had hoped to liberate their homelands with the help of the German army and so had fought alongside the Germans, not realizing they were being duped.) These men had been brought here all the way from Norway and handed over to the Soviet authorities by the English. The reason? Only the English know the political reasons for it. The question remains to be answered by history, which may find out many other instances of such English piracy. There is no doubt, however, that after Germany's capitulation, this battalion surrendered to the English troops, who, after a certain period, handed them over to the Soviets. The strange thing about this is that the British government retained the entire officers' corps and handed over only the small fry — the soldiers and noncommissioned officers.

With the men in this battalion, the Soviets were very "generous." They tried them and sentenced them in block to a maximum number of years; twenty to twenty-five years for war crimes. It would be interesting, however, to find out what happened to their officers, the leaders left under the jurisdiction of His Britannic Imperial Majesty. As to the men handed over to the

Soviets, they had been regrouped in platoons of approximately forty men each. Each platoon had been questioned. How many executions had they take part in? That was the key question. The answers varied from platoon to platoon: five, seven, etc.

We must add that the battalion had been assigned a special mission: to carry out reprisals. We will not judge the rightness or wrongness of these reprisals. War makes its own laws, even mad laws because war itself is madness. Just watch a simple scuffle or fight between two individuals whose cars happen to collide, or who bump into each other on a bus. No doubt, it is pure madness but a madness which develops with its own mad laws . . . But it is one thing to see the madness on the other side, to exaggerate it even beyond caricature; and another thing to pretend not to see it on your side and to trumpet your side's virtues, while, in fact, it is the same pure madness. As a matter of fact, the purpose of this unpleasant chronicle is to reveal such self-deceptions.

If one of these platoons of, say, forty men admitted to taking part in ten executions, the Soviets questioning them would draw a line below the figures and make this simple calculation: 40 x 10 = 400 victims, even though in reality the whole platoon of forty men had taken part in no more than the interest charged on the whole account by the Soviet propaganda machine, propaganda so necessary to their claims of Nazi bestiality.

The Soviet system of computation thus raised the probable number of executions by the whole battalion from 400 or 500 to 250,000. Some performance! By this quick and oversimplified method, one could add up figures which would surpass the whole population under the heel of the Soviets! And since we are dealing with "Statistics, Crimes Against Humanity and Notorious War Criminals," let us stop a while and hang around the other camp — the self-proclaimed victims, humanists and virtuous people. For example, does the Soviet government know the number of those who died in the common graves at Special Camp Number 4 in Bautzen between 1945 and 1949? If the Soviet government no longer has this record, or if it never kept the record, or if the figures have been lost, this same Soviet government, in a new Nuremberg, could find it out from the survivors, from that rascal who in the night plodded the asphalt of the road surrounding the east wing and carried out 15,000 dead. It is true that these had not been shot or hanged, or castrated, or gassed — as they say the Nazi bandits did with their victims. These died of hunger, died spitting blood, seized by tuberculosis because of malnutrition

and the "humanitarian" treatment in a prison managed by the Soviet government.

What answer could, for example, Colonel Kazakov, the camp commander, give at this new Nuremberg trial? And Kazakov was not the only one in charge! Gorin could talk, and Zelenin, the general, too, and so many others — officials and prisoners who aided them. And their statistics would not have to be fabricated. What could they say about the mountains of corpses in Bechetovka, on the banks of the Volga? What could they say about those in the graveyards of Tambov and Potma and Oransk and Vorkuta? What could they tell us about the Polish Katyn? Those few hundred Italians who survived and returned home can still talk about the hundreds or thousands of dead at Tambov; the Romanians, the Japanese, the Hungarians, the Germans, all nationalities that passed through their death camps and survived can still talk! The lofty Soviet "humanism" cannot be so easily forgotten! And the economic-political-administrative mess which has been ruling in those places cannot be forgotten!

THE ANGEL OF BAUTZEN

Let me get back to Bautzen again because I feel a strong attachment to a certain person. There had been, here in Bautzen, a physician with the rank of captain, greatly distressed by the daily death rate. This physician was a lost sheep in this hell of commissars and devils. This physician was a woman. A woman dressed in the uniform of a medical captain but a woman who strived to save and help in spite of the lack of effective means and especially in spite of the inhuman indifference or, sometimes, even malevolent enmity against her. This woman physician was nameless to us. We inherited her from the authorities, so to speak, and she has lived in our memories only by her nickname. She was "the Angel," "the White Angel." Later on, in other camps and prisons, people would talk about "the Angel from Bautzen." None of the survivors could ever forget her. Who was she? A modest woman. A woman physician.

I do not think anyone among the Soviets could have ever harmed her as long as we, the enemy, spoke highly of her — as long as we, the enemy, thought she was an honor to her people and atoned for their sins, errors, stupidity, and cunning mischief.

Most likely, the high mortality rate frightened even the administration. However, the food remained just as bad and insufficient, as also were the medical help from personnel, medicines, and proper medical instruments.

I know that at the insistence of this White Angel, they let one of the prisoners — a common thief who nevertheless had something of a heart and volunteered for the job — procure an x-ray apparatus for the camp. What he did was to send a letter to the other thieves in his gang, with whom — among their other burglaries — he had masterminded the robbery of a medical supply train, derailed by a bombing during the last days of the war. In the letter he asked them to ship to the address of the prison hospital, the x-ray machine which they still had in their possession. He placed one condition on the exchange, however: He was to be taken to town for a walk, unostentatiously, like an ordinary, peace-loving man, so he could get word on to his confederates.

So the x-ray apparatus arrived, shipped in a truck whose driver did not know anything about what was going on. (In spite of their promises the Soviets did not keep their word.)

Well, this mean gang of thieves turned out to be more honorable, more understanding, and more dependable than this organized state stretching out over one sixth of the earth's surface.

The x-ray machine arrived! But tuberculosis was not the only plague wreaking havoc in Bautzen. One day almost all the prisoners turned blind. The new disease showed itself in the loss of eyesight as soon as daylight was gone. It was called "night blindness." It was caused by the exhaustion of the last reserve of fat in the body. It was the result of undernourishment and lack of vitamins.

Because the medical personnel panicked, an entire medical commission — led by a physician with the rank of general — arrived. They were accompanied by Colonel Kazakov, commander of the prison, and by the White Angel.

"It's nothing!" the physician-general said, who most likely had come across similar cases. "Give every prisoner a ration of 30 grams of salted herring every two days, for forty or fifty days, and everything will be in order again," he added.

Indeed, the physician-general's prescription produced results. We regained our eyesight. Later on I came across other prescriptions for this disease which — because of undernourishment — was common in all Soviet camps and prisons. One such prescription recommended pouring two to five drops of fish oil in the eyes.

Later on, when I found myself in the Arctic Circle, after the

Soviets had framed me with a show trial (about which I shall expand in due time), I gave these prescriptions to the general prosecutor of the Soviet Union to pass along to the American physicians who visited the prison camps of North Korea, where the prisoners suffered from the same disease. Over here, those who knew I had lived in the Western World sometimes have reproached me for the indifference of the West toward the Soviet policy of starvation. I do not know why I personally should be blamed for the undernourishment of South Korean prisoners in North Korea, since this practice was also carried out by the friend and ally of the U. S. A., the Soviet Union.

I assume that Soviet dialectics had discovered this policy of undernourishing people by looking over their fences at the Nazis or at the bourgeois capitalist countries with whom they collaborated: yesterday with Hitler's totalitarian regime, today with the Anglo-French liberal bourgeoisie.

I recall the shameless way in which the Soviet general prosecutor would lecture to an undernourished audience in the Soviet camps about North Korea, where according to the prosecutor himself, prisoners lived in a paradise like the Soviet's. This kind of impertinence prodded me to answer him back, though more decently. Of course, I had to pay for this impertinence, but if you provoke a scuffle, you should expect a brawl!

From where, I could not tell, all the Bautzen Camp learned that the White Angel would soon leave us. The reason remained unknown, but the news was enough to arouse us. We put our heads together and decided unanimously, to express ourselves in a way that could show this lady physician our gratitude for the help she had given us and for her immeasurable goodness.

Using colored threads, unravelled from our own socks and shirts, we sewed a sketch on a white bedsheet: the silhouette of a white angel in a white gown climbing down the steps in front of a faintly lighted cell with iron bars across a small window, and inside the cell some prisoners breathing in pain. From scraps of wood and leftovers — carving and gouging — we fashioned six decorated cups with folk designs. At her last call on the sick, the prisoners presented her with their gifts. And in order to emphasize their meanings, the gifts were accompanied by the entire set of tools they had managed to shape secretly in order to accomplish their work of art: bone and wooden needles, chisels and knives of all shapes and sizes (made from wire, rusted nails — flattened and rubbed — shoe taps, coils from the visors and tops of military caps, etc.).

We were moved, and so was she. It was like the innocence and thrill of a first kiss — this scene of silent parting. And no matter how close she had been to us, the passing days with their oblivion and the perfume of memories rolled over us — memories of a white angel — a piteous and feeble sparkling amid the deep darkness, deep and black, a terrifying deep and terribly black darkness.

CHILD'S PLAY

Approximately in this same period (I do not remember the actual time), there was, in cell 14, fifth floor, west, someone from Horst Petzold in Doeblen, a lad about sixteen or seventeen years old by the name of Werner. He was an epileptic. His initial arrest and sentencing had occurred when he was twelve or thirteen years old. While playing with children his own age, he had come across some discarded guns. Since the modern world began, children have liked pistols and guns, even if they were wooden imitations. These youngsters picked up the guns and went to play in a nearby woods. But this was not just the old game of cops and robbers. They had seen events before their own eyes — a real and live war. So they began to play at war. They were sharpshooters, engaged in tactics and strategy.

They had read how their forefathers had fought against Napoleon, and each of them became a Wilhelm Tell, or Robin Hood, or Ivanhoe or a Zoia Kosmodemianskaya. The American military police had heard their shots, repeated over and over again during the daytime, and began to lie in ambush and watch the woods. It was therefore proper when they stopped the boys and held them for questioning. After about two weeks — so Werner told us — the Americans let them go home. They quickly realized whom they were dealing with and even began to laugh at the boys' childish bravery.

"Every day we got twenty-five strikes on the buttocks, and we promised never to play with bullets again. But they gave us good food and soft white beds. Then, after two weeks, they let us go home," Werner told us.

The dividing up of their world transferred the region in which Werner and the other boys lived to fall under Soviet administration, and the Americans withdrew. When the Soviets arrived — well informed as to what had happened — they called the young warriors in for further questioning, which ended up with their

sentencing. Werner and a few like him, smarter than the rest, managed to get sentences of only fifteen years. The twenty-five blows administered by the Americans were not punishment enough. And the Soviets were not joking. The existence of even their own Resistance fighters was a threat to them. So they made victims of people older and younger than Werner. They sang praises of them in heroic literature, but sentenced them in the real world.

THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER PEOPLE

Starvation in Bautzen had long ceased to be a novelty. The end of the daily lunch break was, in fact, the beginning of terrible pains. The pains of empty stomachs began to be more acute after the delusion of lunch. And there were the number of dead, those afflicted with tuberculosis, night blindness, swelling of tissues through the accumulation of body fluids, boils and psoriasis . . . To begin to understand the atmosphere of such a place one must experience the starvation, the madness of starvation. The only thing on the minds of these once human beings was food, the only thing that could trigger a discussion. Wherever there were two persons and they talked about something, if you eavesdropped, you would find they were talking about food. Any conversation centered at once upon food. Food was the only preoccupation that could stir an interest in these exhausted individuals. The only well received lectures were those by the former cooks, bakers, and eventually the waiters — the connoisseurs of the culinary arts. Food was a collective obsession . . . It did not matter if you were awake or dreaming. Food, food, food.

One of the prisoners woke up and began to talk and talk and talk. He was telling the others, who looked at him with rapture, their mouths open and their throats dry — that he had a dream — that he was eating. He had a huge cauldron in front of him and the cauldron was filled to the top with beans and sausages . . . in fat gravy, and there was a smell that made your mouth water.

"Did you manage to get just one bite?" the listeners asked.

"I ate it up. Yes. I ate up all of it!" the prisoner said.

"All of it?" the other prisoners wondered, some of them whistling and others licking their lips.

"Yes. All of it!" continued the prisoner.

"What happened then?" asked one of the listeners.

"I woke up because I didn't have enough of it!" answered the dreamer.

The story went through several versions, equally tedious. However, the others continued to listen to it with interest. Then they began to remember things from past feasts (described in detail, even growing into detailed cookbooks, each trying to outdo the others in refining his story).

The previous preoccupation of the newcomers had been women and amorous adventures, but these had ended a long time before. Now the main concentration was on hunger, which cast its dark shadow over everything else. In those circumstances a stinking fishhead had more appeal than the charms of Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, or Brigitte Bardot — one former Casanova used to say; and Descartes was valued less than a cabbage leaf fished out of a bowl. Aristotle, Kant, or Hegel put together, plus all their old teachers and disciples (as a philosophy professor told me) were not worth as much as a dead worm boiled in Satan's cauldron after being taken from the flesh of dead camels in the desert of Kazakhstan.

The prison experience was long and full of hardships! For me it lasted almost nine years; for others it still lasts. It is imbued in my mind and recorded in my flesh. However, today I can hardly believe it was possible. It seems like a horror story, though it was very real. It lives in all my senses, in my whole being, a cruel reality. However, it never succeeded in clouding my mind or perturbing my soul. The human specimens who escaped unmaimed were few, and I am glad I can count myself among those few, because it is not easy to watch your own death! It is something not to let yourself be broken by the desperate attempts of the K. G. B. to turn you into their secret tool or to enroll you in one of their liberating divisions, those divisions which the Soviets made up out of the hungry by promising them food and future comfort.

It is something not to let yourself be charmed by the lecturers who got the ears of weaklings by making their mouths water. It is something to keep yourself in one piece when from one side you are assailed by the pangs of hunger and from the other side the temptation of a paradise promised by the Mohammeds of the Soviet secret police!

It was during this period of gastronomic obsessions that the rumor spread that somewhere in one of the attics of the villas surrounded by high fences, there was an underground radio station and an American spy network. Since the prisoners had

heard of this, there is no doubt that the camp administration had also heard about it, but they kept it to themselves and were content to do their spying on us. Then, there came a wave of searches after searches, at the most unexpected hours. They ransacked every corner. The walls were tapped, the window sills were removed, the floor taken up, the common beds taken apart plank by plank. At the same time, questionings were conducted. One day they discovered in the mantle lining of one prisoner, a strip of white cloth on which there were some very strange markings. This unexpected discovery heightened even more the rage with which the search was being conducted. All linings were torn open, as well as all clothing patches. They found another forty or fifty unfortunates who had hidden strips of cloth with markings as strange as the first one discovered. These persons were isolated immediately, and put into the "factory of truths."

The Soviets feverishly followed up the unravelling of the supposed spy network. All that was left for the K. G. B. to do was to make the spies talk and to lay their hands on the leaders. After almost two weeks of questioning and broken bones, the "experts," who had come directly from Moscow, succeeded in deciphering the secret of the markings. In fact, they confirmed what those forty or fifty unfortunates had already said from the very beginning: The markings were simple cooking recipes -- the last material and spiritual resource of bodies tortured by hunger. Out of the extremely refined recipes conjured up by the prisoners and out of the complexity of the ingredients they had dreamt up, out of the subtle ways of mixing them up and the exact cooking times — the necessity had arisen to commit these to memory in a kind of shorthand with secret symbols or markings. Man's ingenuity had found a way to preserve these documents.

It is a pity that those recipes were lost. Those strips of cloth should have been preserved as documents of that collective insanity which only hunger could have created. As a matter of fact, the survivors of those times and places can testify how ashamed all those were who could not invent at least one recipe that would interest the others. The lack of notebooks, improvised out of no matter what, to write down those recipes was tantamount to a moral lapse. It was a situation worse than that of an astronomer without a telescope, or a music lover without a radio to tune in to music. Are these normal ways of life, or passions? Fortunately for us, our environment changes and with it our ways of life, and our passions change too. Out of such a succession of ways of life, it is difficult to tell which is the natural and healthy one. If there is one . . .

After this so-called spy incident, the authorities discovered the real spy — the ruthless and highly regarded investigator among the ranks of the vigilant members of the K. G. B. center in Bautzen.

GOODBYE, BAUTZEN!

The miserable stopover in Bautzen came to an end. In March, 1950, with a group of sixty other prisoners, I was transported to Sachsenhausen. Shortly after we left, the Bautzen Prison was handed over to the authorities representing the East German government. The news reached us that the new East German administration — subservient to the Soviets — was even worse than that of their Soviet masters, both in general and particularly with regard to food. Both from the Soviets and from newly arrested persons, we found out about the hunger strike there and the public outcry which followed when the hungry prisoners reached the limit of their patience. On bedsheets, the prisoners had written, in capital letters, the words "Help! Save us! We are dying of hunger!" They had lowered the sheets from the windows to hang outside on the yellow prison walls. Since the prison and the camp were on top of a hill in the city, the desperate appeal of the prisoners could be read by passers-by and the news passed on by word of mouth. Shortly afterwards, people from the city began to gather in front of the prison gates, bringing with them baskets full of food. Unable to cope with the situation, the new, cowardly administration — German and "democratic" — appealed to the Soviet leadership, which very obligingly gave brotherly and selfless help by transferring the prisoners to cells which had no outside windows.

With this last episode, the Bautzen chapter ended for me forever.

SACHSENHAUSEN — SPECIAL CAMP 1. NEW FRIENDS

In Sachsenhausen there was a big turmoil at the time of our arrival. A Soviet commission, joined by a group of German communist police, showed up. Together they started to sort out some of those sentenced, and there was a lot of talk about reviewing court judgments and about the possibility of some releases with-

out punishment. In reality, nobody really knew exactly what this sorting was all about. Even the guards talked about an eventual mass release. More than that, it seemed that even those of us who had just arrived from Bautzen had been specially sent here to be freed. The immediate result of this turmoil was a total lack of supervision of our group, and so I used this opportunity fully, wandering all over the place. But soon we realized what kind of bargain we were really in for. In fact, it was to be the same as in Bautzen, except that here we were not locked up in cells but in barracks. At least we had some air, and this was, undoubtedly, pleasant news!

Talking to the inmates, we found out that there was a high mortality rate here too. If the number of dead could be verified in this camp — that is, by a neutral commission — and if a serious investigation were carried out (including exhumation), the number of those who died here — from spoiled and insufficient food and from the inhuman treatment between 1945 and 1950 — would indeed surpass the number of those who died here during the Nazi administration. This is what we were told by those with whom we talked. The well known German artist George Heinrich died here while a political prisoner, after being operated on for appendicitis.

The prison and the infamous Sachsenhausen camp maintained their reputation in spite of the fact that the Nazi masters had been replaced. The new inmates were greeted by the same common graves for their final resting places.

In these concentration camps, the majority of the prisons were barracks which remained open all the time. Here the prisoners could come out into the open air or take a walk any time they felt like it, without restrictions. Nobody was accustomed to any kind of work and we were idle. To tell the truth, in our wretched condition — only skin and bones — I do not see what kind of work they could have made us perform.

In those few days when I could wander about the camp, I got closely acquainted with Raymond Souillat, younger than I and of French origin. I spoke to him in French, and to Kostikov, a colonel in the French army, who had been kidnapped by the Soviets in Hanover. I shall speak more about them when I write about my sojourn in the Arctic Circle.

For three weeks I was idle here. The group of Frenchmen rechristened me Jean (from my Romanian name Ion), and quickly adopted me. I felt at ease in their company. Together with them (they knew all the ins and outs of the prison) I got some clothes

from the heavily stocked clothing stores left behind by the German army. With what I had on and with what my friends helped me get, I was now well equipped for the hard times which, as Kostikov and Souillat warned me, would soon follow. For the time being I was very happy with these friends and the aviator's fur cap (lined with sheepskin) which with the help of these friends I had grabbed from the clothing store.

As to food, it was no different from Potsdam or Bautzen: There was still hunger, night blindness, tuberculosis, rashes, boils, abscesses, furunculosis, edema, etc. The truth is that I soon began to walk with some difficulty. I could hear the sound of my leg joints, like the squeaking of a door. When I tried to jump from a standing position, a sport at which I had been unbeaten in the old times, my legs gave way and instead of leaping and flying the usual distance of two meters, I fell on my nose like a stupid duckling. As for my weight, I think it got down to half of what it had been before my arrest.

GOING EAST: THE TRANSPORT

In this physical condition, one night (with the Soviets everything takes place at night), instead of the freedom so much talked about, a large group of us were taken to the railway station and put into cars usually used for transporting cattle. In each car they put sixty persons. The train was very long, and a kitchen car had been attached to it. One could gather we were in for a long trip. The first, second, and third day we were given some hot boiled stuff brought in in basins or in tin cauldrons. One basin for each fifteen mouths. For the same fifteen mouths there was one spoon, a wooden spoon neatly painted and having a peculiar round shape, a spoon which — if you did not know how to handle it (that is, to sip from it sideways) — stuck to your mouth and burned your lips. It happened to me . . . . .

After each sip, the spoon had to be "passed," that is, handed over to your neighbor, to another hand and mouth. And so on, from person to person until the cycle of fifteen persons was complete. Then the journey of the spoon started all over again.

To get used to this style of eating was difficult, but hunger drove even the most sophisticated among us to forget their manners and share in the passing of the spoon, an operation imposed upon us by the Soviet communist circumstances. We began our brotherhood by sharing the same spoon.

Only an old, commonplace joke — ascribed sometimes to Pushkin and sometimes to the well known General Suvorov — disturbed this routine. The joke reflects our real rebellion and discontent and illustrates our state of mind. The joke was about one or other of these witty Russians, who had been invited to dine with the Tsar. At the dinner the guest was not given a spoon, intentionally. The others bet on his reaction, and were watching in silence to see how the guest would make out. It was meant to be funny, but the witty dinner companion, pretending that he did not notice the absence of the spoon, improvised one out of bread crust and managed to consume his soup. As soon as he did that, it is said that the guest then addressed the others with the words, "Now, gentlemen, let us eat our spoons!"

The fifteen prisoners adopted the solution of this joke, and from the dark and sour crust of bread, they shaped their own spoons, oval spoons in the West European fashion. The fact that this utensil, improvised out of such low-quality material, did not last to finish the job was not a problem. The most serious problem (which produced a real scuffle) was the loss of control over the utensil. Craftier, quicker hands helped themselves too often, and the hungry ones, unable to stand the anarchy and the theft of food that deprived some of their equal share, protested vehemently. They renounced the advantages of private property as quickly as they had adopted them. Thus the bread crust spoons were eaten up and the passing on of the one wooden spoon was reinstated. Luckily for us, a central authority was not set up. Otherwise the brawl would have ended in bloodshed and punishments by law. But why wonder about the behavior of a few miserable, hungry men when the history of free and well fed men tells us there are always problems of distribution of food, with ensuing brawls and controversy among the establishment economists, as well as food riots! Here in this hungry prison world, terrorized by the spectre of death, one spoonful more or less from that cauldron of boiled stuff (the cauldron was for me the occasion for nine years for quarrels and arguments wherever I was sent) became a matter of life or death. It was the devil's cauldron!

A minor struggle went on sometimes over a single piece of bread, if it had extra crust, the better softer part of this sour bread and which when weighed (being better baked and therefore lighter) gave the impression of greater quantity. Here there were so many opportunities for injustice just in the simple way the daily boiled soup was distributed. It is not the same whether

you get it first or last. Consequently each of us had to take his turn in being first, second, third, and, of course, last. Then if there was any soup left over, the argument arose over its distribution. There was argument over each morsel. It is not the same if you are the first or the last to get the cabbage core picked up on the field after the sheep had eaten the leaves; or to get the nettles, the cock sorrel mowed down when it was as tall as a man on horseback, or the bristle grass, the buckwheat — not to mention the remnants of spoiled, stinking fish or camel meat, full of worms, from Kazakhstan. A bitter fight was waged for each of these morsels, and for each new piece of information. These starving people fought and may be still fighting among themselves, in the name of social justice and morality. It was therefore impossible that the dependable instrument, the unique wooden spoon, could disappear.

BREST-LITOVSK: THE MEDICAL COMMISION AND THE SLAVE MARKET

Let me not get ahead of myself! I was still naive about the extremes of misery. I had seen only a few of its facets: at Lauter, Dresden-Radebeul, Nonnenkloster, Potsdam, Bautzen, Sachsenhausen, and I had just arrived at Brest-Litovsk — a place with a high-sounding name, where in 1917, after the battles along the lakes and, because of the Bolshevik Revolution, a separate peace was concluded between Germany and Tsarist Russia.

So here I was, in Brest-Litovsk. The name carried echoes from the depths of history: a crossroad from times past . . .

Straight from the railroad cars we were paraded through two lines of sentries until we reached a barracks where, stripped of our clothes like newborn babes, we trotted in front of a medical commission. An examination was made, with Soviet criteria. You had to put your foot on an improvised stool, and they pressed the upper side of your toes with their fingers, walking up towards the middle of the foot. With this pressure, sometimes a spot would appear on the foot and then disappear slowly. Sometimes there was no spot. Then you were told to take your foot off the stool and turn around, to the left and then to the right. Then they squeezed your buttocks between their fingers and thumb, like a customer feeling fabric in a store before buying it. Then you had to stretch your arms out, open and close your palms and spread out your fingers, stick your tongue out, and,

finally, open your eyes wide.

Using their standards, the doctors in charge figured out what it was they were to figure out; then they evaluated their findings, whispering to one another, and then motioned for you to step aside, without any explanation whatsoever. From time to time they would utter a "good" or "no," which, repeated over and over again, made me quickly conclude that those prisoners shunted over to the right side were destined to some secret purpose, and those on the left side were worthless. I was motioned to the left; therefore I was considered worthless. Souillat and Kostikov and a few of my other close French friends were also made to stand on the left side.

Later on, I would find out that the whole group lined up on the right were returned to the ready railroad cars and shipped directly to the Arctic Circle, to a camp near Vorkuta in the Autonomous Socialist Republic of Komi.

For us, the unfit, on the left side (among us I spotted a few disabled individuals), the Soviets had reserved the pleasure of a three-or-four-day stopover in the transfer prison there, where we were put into so-called Stolipinsky cars (cars reserved for long-distance trips and provided with compartments where sleeping bunks could be set up, one above the other). We were then locked up, fifteen to twenty in each compartment, after we had been given food for three days: bread, sugar and herring steeped in salt. We had barely left the camp for the cars when the food was already devoured. Better full once than hungry for three days.

In spite of the fact that those experienced with prison food had warned us about the consequences, almost all the prisoners disregarded their advice and downed the herring too. Naturally the thirst, even before we left Brest-Litovsk, was terrible. In the camp we could somehow always find water, but inside the railroad cars, behind bars, we could get neither water nor the right to go to one of the two toilet rooms at the end of each car. The sentry stuck to his orders: only once in the evening and once in the morning. The rest of the time you could rage or even die! If you did not abide by the rules, nobody was in the least interested in you.

But going out for physical necessities brought about a still greater misfortune. With throats burned by the salted fish and crazy with thirst, the prisoners turned to the undrinkable water in the railroad tanks and reservoirs. What followed was a tragicomedy which turned the cars into a stinking hell that lasted for the whole distance from Brest-Litovsk to Moscow (through Minsk, where Major Gorin lived).

In spite of all this, I became convinced that there were still people who could not learn anything, people who forgot it all even after such horrible experiences.

MOSCOW — KRASNI PRISON

In one of the railroad stations on the outskirts of Moscow we were taken off the train and pushed into big vans, with double metallic walls. On the side, provided with dark windows, were different letterings, such as "bread," "fish," "meat," "fruits." It was my second chance to verify what I had heard about the famous K. G. B. vans.

Painting by Julius Stuermer
The Soviet Power: a new "democracy" in Europe

I asked myself, why the need for all this masquerade? What did they have to hide when everybody knew what the vans were and talked about it? But what did the West know? What appearances were the Soviets trying to keep up? One must come to the conclusion that either the impudence or the unimaginative small-mindedness of the K. G. B. were even greater than reputed. This time, from the railroad car to the Krasni Prison I was "food." On another occasion I was "meat," and, finally, "fruits."

The new prison was a huge transfer point. Between 2,500 and 5,000 prisoners at a time, taken in from the most different corners of the country and taken out in the most unexpected directions. On the outside it looked like an ordinary building, but on the inside it looked like hell (as did every other Soviet prison).

Once locked up, I encountered other troubles. The clothes which I had managed to obtain in the Sachsenhausen camp with the help of my French friends stirred up the envy and the ap-

petites of many in that transfer prison. My leather coat, my fur gloves, my aviator's cap lined with sheepskin drove crazy these refugees from the bite of northern frost. Their eyes glittered as they surrounded me. Without any initial move from me, they began impudently to try to bargain with me: "How much do you want for this leather coat?" one of them asked. "Don't you want to sell these gloves?" another broke in. "And your fur cap?" another asked. "What can you do with them? They will take them away from you anyway!" he concluded.

There was a crowd around me, as at a flea market. Though inexperienced in such matters, I realized that these people were not the real buyers but simple intermediaries or agents provocateurs.

They tempted me with money, food, cigarettes. They laid out all kinds of currency here in the prison, money which would have tempted not only Andromache or Penelope, but even Virtue itself. Well, I did not give in. I smelt the danger, but I took the chances! My refusal was adamant. I needed neither food nor their sugar, cigarettes, or padded coats which would have kept me warmer than my leather coat.

I broke away with difficulty and walked away, searching for my own group. But I felt I was being watched and closely followed. From my experience up to now, I sensed the danger but I could not fathom the shapes it was going to take. Still, I was among human beings, even if they were thieves. What could happen? Later on I was to find out that even among human beings, in those Soviet prisons there were things they could do which were sometimes more horrible and more incredible than in a jungle.

EVEN IF YOU ARE RIGHT, YOU MAY COME OUT A LOSER

Finally someone came in with a long list and began to call out the names of those in my group. He arranged us in tens and shipped us away. Group after group left for their ordained destination. Soon only I was left, alone. Well, I concluded that some kind of crooked business was going on and that Soviet officialdom was involved. I knew from Moreni, my hometown in the Prahova Valley, that sometimes you may come off a loser even if you are right.

I was soon given into the custody of a huge man who, without saying a word, took me to the fourth floor, into a long room

heavy with clouds of cheap tobacco smoke and the sour smells of human sweat. Through the mist I could distinguish two rows of bunk beds, one on top of the other, along the two long walls of the room. They were ordinary beds. The occupants, who were playing cards, interrupted their activity upon my arrival and began to stare at me. Some of them were completely naked. They did not seem to care. Complete silence suddenly set in, and I sensed a tense waiting. "Strip off or you'll die of heat here! Throw everything you have on you onto that blanket!" my custodian commanded, convincingly for the first time.

I pondered for a brief moment, stared at him, and took off my clothes. Some of the occupants climbed down from their bunks and surrounded me. I felt like a helpless mouse surrounded by cats. All this was taking place in complete silence. It was clear to me that something was in store for me and that I was to be a victim. They were awaiting my reaction, or resistance, or an outbreak. I understood perfectly that I was being provoked in order to lose what I had not wanted to sell . . . I also realized that this time any resistance on my part would not make any sense.

"Looking at his cap, you could say he is a German," one of them said.

"He's too neatly dressed! A fashionable gentleman, this German!" another said.

"Big capitalist!" added another.

Then they bombarded me with questions. Who was I? Where did I come from? When and where did they arrest me? Why did they arrest me? Where was I held last? How many had been transferred here and how many had died? What news did I have from the outside world?

Little by little their curiosity died away, and they backed down, and I got the meaning of all this: All my belongings were now gone, as if by magic, even my knapsack and my clothes. I was left naked, indeed! All that I had left was my blanket.

I could hardly believe my eyes. Well, I still could not believe it, though I saw there was nothing left. I stood there, transfixed and stiff as a board.

PYOTR IVANOVICH — CHILD OF OUR TIMES

One individual looking like an inmate of the famous Sing-Sing, with a hoarse bass voice, woke me to reality. He was seated

somewhere on an isolated bed, and in front of him were spread some playing cards.

"You said that you come from Romania, I heard? Come closer!" he said in broken Romanian, softening heavily his consonants like a Russian. The others stood silent and watched us curiously. I went closer, and he continued:

"Where from in Romania? Bucharest?"

"No, I come from Ploesti," I said.

"I see. From the oil city . . . Right from Ploesti?" he said.

"Well, not exactly. I actually come from Moreni," I answered.

"I know. I know. It is near the Valley of the Voivods. But, please, come and sit down!" he invited me. Then he shook my hand and said: "My name is Pyotr Ivanovich. This is my name. Pyotr Ivanovich! Remember that!"

I sat down beside him and waited to be asked what I was thinking so that I could, in turn, with the same affected indifference, ask him where he had learned Romanian and how come he knew the place where I had been born so well. I could hardly wait for him to start the conversation.

Well, he did not talk directly to me. He talked to everyone in the room. In a very quiet and indifferent voice he began talking in a slang out of which I could not make anything, though in my mind I was convinced — from my earlier conversations with Konstantinov and Ionas — that I had a smattering of Russian. There was no doubt in my mind that those to whom he was speaking understood him perfectly, because, piece by piece, as if by magic and to my great astonishment, on the blanket still spread out in front of the door, all my things which were gone, now reappeared. Then, after one of them stacked them as neatly as I had left them, he picked them up and carried them over near Pyotr, my new acquaintance.

"You see," said the bearer of my things, "the boys were very curious to see and at least feel these things from another country. Please forgive them. You know, it is very hard to curb our curiosity."

Pyotr beckoned him to leave us, and gathering up the cards with which he was finished playing, opened up his heart . . .

He was a soldier in the Red Army, and all of a sudden, he got a crazy idea. He got sick and tired of marching through mud; he got fed up with political officers, orders, and bullets. One day he said to himself, "The hell with this war!" and deserted the army. He never returned to his military unit and that was it!

In the village of Plesa, near Moreni, he had met a woman by

the name of Maria and had hid at her place for a long time.

"Look, these two handkerchiefs were sewn by her!" he said, taking two handkerchiefs out of his pockets. "And since you too are Romanian, take one as a token of remembrance from me! You might as well know that I loved this Maria very much. If you ever go back home, stop by her place, show her the handkerchief and tell her about me, because I won't be able to go there myself. Please, do not forget!"

I must say that I kept Pyotr Ivanovich's handkerchief on me all the time, wherever I went; and I still have it today. But I could never find Maria. Right now I feel near my friend Pyotr Ivanovich. I am silent, and he keeps talking. In him was all the deep sadness of a wasted life.

"As I was saying, I deserted the army and teamed up with other deserters, in a gang. We stole everything, especially cars, which we sold very conveniently for us, to other thieves, bigger and more cunning. Maria helped me, gave me shelter. She was my soul. You must know that our love was true love. It was the first time in my life that I felt free as a bird, and I lived to my heart's content. And I don't regret any of it. I am glad to have met you, and I am happy that you will visit Maria if you ever get out of here alive . . . "

I stayed with Pyotr for eleven days. I told him the story of my life, and he told me his story. We kept talking, and I did not realize the days passing by. Pyotr's stories, for the most part, seem so incredible that to this day I have not felt free to tell them to others. Besides, I have not had the opportunity and the right setting . . . However, since it is possible that these stories are true, I shall recall a few . . . Eventually, their truth may be verified or confirmed by eye witnesses. From them we could, indeed, benefit; they would be valuable documents of that time, records of manners in a violent age, this new "golden age" of mankind.

Pyotr told me that another gang of Soviet army deserters and fugitives had dressed up in military uniforms and pretended to be a Soviet patrol. He said he regretted not having such an ingenious idea himself. This gang had stopped the car of the former King of Romania, Michael I, on the Romanian national highway. The King was just returning from his summer retreat at Sinaia and was heading for Bucharest. They had robbed the King and his companions of everything they had on them; then they made them take off their clothes and left them at the side of the highway, while they took off, still disguised as a Soviet patrol, in

the royal automobile.

The first car to pass by the royal entourage, after the robbery, happened to be a jeep with American soldiers stationed in Bucharest, who were returning from Brasov, where they had spent their weekend.

The King, dressed only in the royal underwear, explained what had happened, got into the American jeep (together with his companions), and was driven at high speed towards Bucharest. They stopped, however, at Campina, at the local Soviet military command post, where the King lodged a formal protest.

The Soviets took immediate action and started to search for the robbers.

"They were not too hard to find," said Pyotr, with bitterness, "because the idiots, after such a clean job, did not find anything better to do than stop at the biggest restaurant in the town of Baicoi, at the Dobrescu, located at the cross-roads of the national highway and a secondary road."

The thieves were surrounded, arrested, and shot on the spot, in spite of the intervention of the King and of the American soldiers.

From all these details provided me by Pyotr, his stories can be verified. If not, we have here the fantasy of a prisoner. I do not know why, but all the time I had the feeling that Pyotr was in the habit of exaggerating things. Whatever he did, whatever he said, even about others, had to acquire huge proportions. Even the most down-to-earth subjects of his stories always grew out of proportion. The dimensions of events, though narrated without flourish, had to be monumental.

Maybe, in the depths within this human derelict which was Pyotr Ivanovich, lay a misdirected visionary soul, the soul of what might have been an architect or a poet, but whom the weight of circumstances dragged to the bottom, and who — with every turn of the wheel — was beaten down to the level of human scum and helplessness, his wings broken.

Even today, when I remember this huge man with the soul of a child, a man whom Fate made my friend, teacher, and protector during a difficult, trying period in my life, I cannot but rank him among the classic heroes of Russian literature. Pyotr Ivanovich was for me a strange combination of the fictional character Asia of Turgenev; the Rogozhin, Dimitri Karamazov, Raskolnikov, and Stavrogyn of Dostoevsky.

But Pyotr was the child of our age, no matter how many threads and roots linked him to a tumultuous and chaotic past.

Therefore, within the context of Soviet reality, Pyotr was for me a live colossus sprung from the great pain and struggle of millions of martyrs of the twentieth century.

Magnitogorsk, Donbas, Dniepropetrovsk, Dnieperstroi, Uralets, Kirov, Pechora Valley, Norilsk, Novosibirsk — collectives, state farms, pioneers, pioneers! All over this stretch, this geographic immensity, you encounter gigantisms which belch smoke, and people who fret and fume and weave dark thoughts and dreams but in reality slip into languishing productivity and inferior products. Collective farms claiming millionaire production — with starving peasant workers! Ultra-modern factories with the latest equipment, and poorly dressed laborers; majestic furnaces and cast-iron foundries, hydroelectric stations and rolling mills with the latest designs, but importing their steel and piping from tiny Sweden, their tools and ships from despised Finland or Japan. Yes, millions and millions. Year after year, tons and tons of wheat and other cereals from capitalist beasts in the United States, Canada, or Australia . . . after the Soviet monitors of mankind had sucked the last drop of wealth from the countries which they had christened as "fraternal" or "friendly."

In other words, dreams and torment. Pyotr Ivanovich will probably always remain a true giant — misunderstood, tumultuous, chaotic, and complex — like the conclusion of Sergei Esenin's poem dedicated to "Russia the great/Russia the eternal."

"Let me tell you what I heard from someone who in 1945 worked in the office of our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vishinsky, when he went to you Romanians for talks," Pyotr whispered to me at another time when he was continuing to unfold the account of pranks by extremely important personalities.

"Vishinsky, accompanied by his retinue, went to a conference at Snagov, near Bucharest, where there is a lake and a big restaurant right in the middle of the forest which you may remember.

"On his way back, though under escort and a retinue of cars, a powerful gang of Red deserters blocked the highway and attacked his entourage. They robbed the Russians of all their valuables and left them in the middle of the forest. But these guys were stupid, too. That same day they were caught at the Mioritza restaurant, carousing at the side of the road on the banks of Lake Herastrau. Right there in front of the restaurant, they were executed Soviet style, without any questioning. This is what the person in Vishinsky's retinue told me, an individual whom I personally met while I was in prison, and, believe me,

I couldn't understand why this idiot big shot had to spy for the West and betray state secrets. He had twenty-five years of service. Or maybe," Pyotr searched back in his thoughts, "since he had seen and known too much and they had to put him somewhere safe!! . . . Maybe he wasn't guilty after all? He didn't seem so stupid as to let himself be drawn into a trap! Well, one can never tell!" he said to himself. "With us that is the way things go. Today a big shot, tomorrow in prison! Today in prison, tomorrow, again, a big shot! However, this goes only for some people: there are big connections, political turnovers . . . Only the very small ones stay in jail until the devil takes over possession of their souls. No one gives a damn about our Ivan any more. Here is what they say in Russia: The Russians are divided into three groups. One group leads, another is free to do the labor, and the third group is in prison. This is the way they are split, from group one to three. Soon those imprisoned get out and replace the laborers, who replace the leaders. When I speak of the leaders, I don't mean the top men but the small supervisors in charge of horses, cabbage, kitchens, stores; accountants, labor leaders . . . No big deal! Now the replaced leaders are sent to jail. Then after a while the wheel turns again and the cycle begins again. And this shift is routine for the masses and the so-called middle class. It seldom touches those at the top . . . In any case I never heard of any one at the very bottom climbing to the top. No! The chance is one in a million! It happened just once when the Revolution came. In those times every dog fought for the big bone! Today it doesn't work any more! Those at the top are holding on to their seats tightly, and never let go! Yes, brother Ion," as he often addressed me, "I'm telling you the truth or I'm damned stupid!" Whenever he got into that mood, he turned speechless.

What was told me by Pyotr Ivanovich could be mere gossip, inventions of an overheated brain. However, no matter which they are — truth or gossip — I can say for sure that they are less fantasy than the information fed out, the guarantees made, or the reports given out on the accomplishments, the brotherly policy trumpeted by the Soviet press, radio, and television, through the agency of T. A. S. S.

My stay at Krasni Prison meant a recovery for me, thanks to Pyotr Ivanovich. This man managed to get me food and demanded that I eat it up. He practically stuffed me. I realized that everyone feared him and that his secret but trustworthy connections extended even among the guards. I have no doubts they were

evil connections. They were somehow associated with the mutual purpose of plunder, because I could never explain how food and other things could suddenly appear in our room. I stayed there for too short a time to uncover that mystery. However, I think I smelt out one of their methods: Two or three prisoners would be taken out of the cell — under the pretext that they had to go to the toilet — and put into that particular cell that they were supposed to plunder. Overnight, after the operation was over and the spoils taken, under the same or for other reasons, they were taken again, where they distributed the spoils out to their confederate guards or confederate prisoners in those other cells where everything had disappeared. The supreme guarantee that nothing could happen to cast suspicion anywhere was the guard who always knew nothing and who performed his duties according to stipulated requirements. Most likely I escaped such plunder because of Pyotr's attachment to Maria, from the village of Plesa, near my native Moreni.

I was soon to see infamy and shamelessness greater than the plunder in this prison. All these deeds took place with the silent complicity of officials — big and small — who amassed their profits and sweetened their fate.

With the same tacit complicity, under my own eyes, a former prosecutor from Leningrad (who was also a disabled war veteran; he had lost a leg) was savagely beaten after being turned over to some common criminals who recognized him as a former prosecutor. Of course, no one saw or heard anything. The vendetta, the terrible vendetta of those sentenced against the whole clan of judges was carried out with the complicity of the authorities, who had their own accounts to settle with this man. The next morning, at daybreak, the victim was carried out unconscious on a balnket and given over to the guard at the ambulatory hospital.

On the tenth day of my stay at Krasni Prison, after giving out orders in that same incomprehensible argot, Pyotr handed over to me a few parcels with food and tobacco, for my trip.

"You will leave tomorrow," he said. "After a stopover at Vologda, you will continue on your way to Vorkuta. First of all, take good care of yourself! This is law number 1. Law number 2 is: Don't kill yourself working. Don't try to be a hero, and don't indulge in idle talk if you don't want to leave your bones over there. And if you have trouble with anyone on your journey, just mention my name. Tell him or them that I am your friend and pass along the news I have given you. And when you get back

to Romania, stop over at Plesa, at Maria's house, and give her the handkerchief I gave you the first night you came to my cell. Tell her all you know about me and whatever you find out about me in the future. And so tell her that I haven't forgotten her but that there is no way I can get to her. And maybe it is better for both of us. What was indeed beautiful never returns. But you must tell her that she was very dear to me and that I haven't forgotten her!"

Between Moscow and Vorkuta: prisons and concentration camps

I was greatly obligated to Pyotr, and because I realized that of all the things he had seen on me, the thing he most coveted was my wool trousers made in the U. S. A., I took them out of my knapsack and handed them over to him.

"I know you like them, and I give them to you with all my heart!"

I watched him as he looked at them excitedly; and this is the way I still remember him to this day, that sphinx from Krasni Prison.

THE FORMER MONASTERY IN VOLOGDA

The next day, as Pyotr had told me in advance, I was taken out of the transfer prison and I embarked for Vorkuta, with a first stopover at Vologda. From the conversations on the train, I realized that I was the only one to escape with my earthly possessions intact. Thus I was convinced once more that the accidental presence of Pyotr Ivanovich in that prison in Moscow was indeed lucky, and that the simple mention of his name at Vologda and Vorkuta would also prove advantageous.

Pyotr Ivanovich's secret power into wastelands, at distances of a thousand kilometers from each other, seems beyond comprehension. His name and friendship proved more respected — amidst confusion and moral debauchery — than had been the orders of Alexander the Great throughout his wide-ranging empire. Even if it was a gang of thieves, its network and the durability of the connections between its members could be an example of depth and strength when there are shared interests, an example for present state systems.

In Vologda, I stayed for three weeks locked up in an old convent with thick walls, one and half meters high, built during the reign of the famous Catherine II.

From what I could find out, from Vologda we would be taken only to Arkhangelsk near the White Sea, or to Vorkuta near the Arctic Circle, because this was the last big railway junction on the Soviet railway system. I also found out that through this place, through the transfer prison at Vologda, for the last several years, contingents of millions of persons of all nationalities had streamed to restock the dreadful prisons and the graveyards of the North.

Here at Vologda I again met, after parting with them at Brest-Litovsk, some of those who had left Sachsenhausen. Among them was Dr. Gerhardt Roenecke from West Germany, a well known specialist and inventor of radio locators and radar equipment. He had been transferred here from the special camp for professionals in Moscow.

Upon entering this prison I was searched "a la russe" — that is stripped naked as a babe and then searched thoroughly all over my body: even between fingers and toes, in the underarms, in the ears, hair, under the soles of the feet, under the tongue, inside the mouth at the sides of the tongue, and in every aperture

and hidden part of the human body.

Here, at Vologda, I experienced the terrible bedbugs, because of which I could not get any rest. In the morning the prisoners were more tired than in the evening, and their bodies were covered with red spots and bites. Terrible beasts, these tiny beings. Out of blankets and sheets, the prisoners would make the most ingenious canopies and bags in which they tried to hide like submerging submarines. But any such attempts at isolating the bugs were in vain because the tiny monsters always proved to be smarter. The bugs always managed to get inside the flesh and

Youngsters from the Ukraine and the Baltic states at work in a concentration camp between Kotlas and Vorkuta

blood, through the gauze covering the improvised air holes or some other secret opening.

In the dead of the night I heard them dropping down constantly. You see, these bedbugs drop down like real paratroopers, from the ceiling (where they climbed with difficulty), onto the

sheets in which we were hiding. This tiny and stinky creature made our hell even more hellish. The overwhelming multitude of bedbugs would paralyze us, new Gullivers overwhelmed by these dwarfs. There was no way to get rid of them. Not with pepper smoke, gas, nor flame. The vicious creatures kept coming. Even disinfestation was attempted.

For three weeks these tiny creatures were our calvary of the flesh, and other woes or wants became less important. Yes, at Vologda I can swear I do not remember ever having felt hunger. Lucky me! Because of the bedbugs! So I forgive them, and I thank them for that kind of happiness. Yes, parasites of any kind are a disaster hard to cope with, especially when you are deprived of the means to get rid of them. They drive you to despair and to behavior that borders on madness.

THE BEDBUG IN CAMP 7074 AND A PRANKSTER

Much later, and after many other stopovers on the misery road, when I was in Camp 7074 for a short while, I had to deal with a fat midget of a colonel from the K. G. B. If I recall correctly, he was the chief of the regional center. And I call him a fat midget because he was very rotund, stocky, and short. "One half of him was in his boots and the other half under his cap," as an acquaintance from Vologda used to say.

In shape and countenance he looked exactly like a bedbug that had eaten its fill, sucking your blood all night long. Because of his physical resemblance to a bedbug and also because of his night activities (dedicated to sucking the vigor out of our souls, threatening us, blackmailing us, depriving us of food or beating us); because of the icebox cell with the blinding light or deep darkness, I nicknamed him — in a moment of happy inspiration and remembering the suffering at Vologda — "Bedbug." From that moment on he was "Bedbug" to every one. However, his true name was Vatsurin, Colonel Vatsurin from the region of Gorky. The nickname became him better because, in Romanian, it had a lyric resonance, was even poetical: "Ploshintza."

From the darkness of the Vologda experience, besides the bedbugs and later their confederate Colonel Vatsurin, I recall (and, indeed, it is a very sad recollection), the drama of two Poles, parachuted by the British Intelligence during the German occupation of Russia, but arrested and sentenced by the K. G. B. to twenty-five years.

Brought to Vologda like us, what had happened to them could have happened to me in Moscow had Pyotr Ivanovich not been there. Their outfits attracted the thugs at Vologda. And because they resisted vehemently and would not let themselves be stripped to the skin, they were stabbed with an awl, all over their bodies.

Concentration camp between Kotlas and Vorkuta

From what they said later to me, I found out the details. They did not have the advantage — as I had — of being asked if they had anything for sale or if they wanted to trade something. Instead two persons in the cell — most likely the gang leaders — impassively played at cards for the clothing of the newcomers. It was as simple as that. There was no question about it! They were the stakes. Like money, or a wife, or a mistress bet at a game of cards, which is no novelty among the well-to-do. And now

the thugs at Vologda played at cards for the clothing of the two Poles, just as I or you would play for Everest or Kilimanjaro. Only in this case, regardless of who was the winner, both Poles would be stripped of their clothes. Strange as this may seem, the game was in fact an opportunity for the Russians to boast and to feed their illusion of grandeur. Russians have always been matadors at heart: their Orthodox Christianity, their Slavism, their populist movements, their brand of "humanism," their militant atheism, etc. Always more terrible, more messianic, more exaggerated.

In this hidden sea of decadence, all the communal flaws are stirred up and manifest themselves openly. In this wormy world one can sense how dullness strives for mastery, at any cost to the brighter world. And one can clearly see how debauchery strives to become the protector and censor of morality; how intolerance poses as defender of freedom for a few who can do whatever crosses their minds; and impotence — dreaming of matching the former splendor of Rome — shunts all roads towards Moscow.

A Romanian peasant — a wise and funny prankster — once told me how he came across a Red Army soldier who was goading some jades pulling a rickety old wagon. It was when we were just entering the new era of interplanetary rockets, supersonic aircraft, and supermechanized warfare. The Romanian asked the Russian: "Where are you going?" "To Berlin," he answered solemnly. Convinced that he could reach Berlin by nightfall, the Russian asked the Romanian, "How many kilometers to Berlin?" The Romanian peasant answered jokingly, "Berlin is just over the hill!" and after pointing to a hill in front of them went on his way. The messianism of this naive Russian, impertinently expecting to reach Berlin with his broken-down cart, illustrates the Russian lack of any sense of proportion. A megalomaniac, this Ivan the Little One, had the same fancies of grandeur as Ivan the Great of yesterday, of today, of tomorrow, of any time, dreaming of another Byzantium, another Rome, dreaming of a new hegemony.

"Who but us must set the fashion? Who if not us must lead?" V. V. Zhdanov, the Soviet historian, asked himself over and over at least ten times in his history of philosophy, striving to dismiss as trash whatever had been previously recorded in the past thousand years. And so on and on: illusions of grandeur, grandeur!

But to return to our story of the megalomaniacs at the Vologda Prison playing cards. At stake was not Byzantium or the philos-

ophy of Socrates but just the clothes of two unfortunate Poles, someone else's clothes. But to anticipate the day of reckoning: Rome did not want to surrender her ways; Byzantium did not want to give up the Bosphorus and its splendors. The reluctant Poles did not want to part with their clothes. And because they resisted fiercely, the megalomaniacs resorted to shoemakers' awls and stabbed the Poles so that they could carry away a pleasant memento for a long time.

One of the two Polish paratroopers told us confidentially, "I even got a few curses and kicks in my ribs because my outfit was not of a too good quality."

Luckily for the Poles, the stabbings were not too deep, though serious enough. Under other circumstances such "insolence" on the part of victims would have resulted in their deaths. What was strange about all this was that in spite of the fact that these were regular occurrences, the perpetrators could never be "discovered" by the Soviet authorities, though they were well known to them. Officialdom never questioned anyone about these incidents and always expressed amazement that such deeds could happen.

Entrance to a concentration camp between Kotlas and Vorkuta

CROSSING INTO THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Well, the last part of Pyotr Ivanovich's prediction came true. His name, which I used out there too, was a kind of password. His

secret connections — his "lines" — had quickly learned of his new address and his recognition of his new friend and protege — that was me — in Vologda. As a result I and my French friends, Souillat and Kostikov, became off limits. As long as I stayed here no one would have anything to do with me or with them. Under different circumstances I might have myself become a stake in a card game, like the two Poles.

So I left for Vorkuta in the Arctic Circle, about which I had learned in my geography in school. It was a long journey. Long and sinister, with extreme cold and many dead. The prolonged undernourishment had its effect. The cold, the suffocating confinement (and the lack of oxygen) did not spare any of those prisoners with cardiac conditions or tuberculosis. The prolonged confinement and physical deprivations blessed many weary bodies with eternal rest.

FIRST ENTRY INTO PARALLEL 68

We arrived at the height of the polar winter. It was frosty, and powerful gusts of wind cut our breath. With my mind's eye I can still see that distressed convoy of people, this time men and women together, shivering in a long line, dragging their feet towards the camp near the Vorkuta railroad station and wrestling with the roughness of the wind and the cold. Subjected to the same wicked weather conditions, the soldiers on guard became even more evil. Maybe it could not be otherwise. The soldiers' own fears and suffering produced in them a harshness which goaded the prisoners into a kind of inspired vigor and willpower, as they were blown down by the gusts of wind. The kicks from the soldiers' boots and the proddings from rifle butts — inspired by the soldiers' hatred and thirst for revenge against the elements — gave the prisoners a new source of strength.

"Come on! Come on!" the soldiers yelled at us.

The weather was rough but you had to keep moving. Any stop, any attempt to sit down meant sure death. The snow, the wind, and the cold spare no one. In this huge, undreamt-of adventure, everything bordered on hallucination.

I held on strong. I must fight. I had not yet tasted life in the Arctic Circle. I must return. Somewhere in this world I have a child waiting for me. I must give Maria from Plesa the news about Pyotr . . . Then I must see Moreni again, with its oil wells, apple trees, its hills . . . Maybe Dieppe again. Or Paris. Or maybe

Heidelberg, where they treated my wounds. I must get back to remind Major Hirsch Gorin of my broken bones. Yes, I must stay alive.

Thoughts ran at random through my mind, and my eyes smarted from the snow and from the snowstorm. Through my mind flashes of countenances and deeds fading away, that kept me warm and moved my legs as I braved the snowstorm which whipped my face. I must keep walking. And I keep walking, passing by shadows that barely move, passing by other shadows that shiver and . . . fall down. I go ahead, passing shadows that are half down and buried by the snow. Nobody has time for me. No one has time for anyone else. And I, I do not have time for anyone else . . . I must keep walking . . . I must live, at least for the sake of Major Hirsch Gorin. We pass on, one after another. We all act in concert. I join this sad dance . . . We all are barrels that have lost their hoops. We look like barrels, but in fact we have long ago even ceased to be barrels. Some have even lost their staves. We will never be barrels again, unless we can again find the callused and holy hand of the cooper .....

In the Soviet death camps there is order and discipline due to the watchful eye of the K. G. B.

But look! A soldier from the guard is holding up and helping an old Ukrainian woman. The imaginations of the prisoners flare up, and someone starts the rumor — which spreads rapidly down the convoy in all the languages of our Babel — that a son, a soldier in the guard, has by sheer chance discovered his mother (one of those sentenced to this place). It does not matter if this is a pure fabrication or the truth. What was there was the seed of a myth. An aged and toil-worn old woman, whipped by the cold and beaten down by deprivations, will rock in her lap a wonder child, will mother mankind. If only for the sake of that comforting lap, no woman should be here on our way to Siberia. She should not have been here, even if she was guilty of rocking to her breast that ugly creature in the guard . . .

IMAGINATION OR TRUTH? WHERE AM I?

On this northern parallel, where Vorkuta lies, and beyond, all the northern land beyond the Arctic Circle, the polar tundra — barely seen in some places, dwarfish, sandy, stony, and even swampy in other places — stretches out. In this part of Europe and also to the east, in Asia, from ancient times different tribes of Eskimos have lived, tending their herds, fishing, or hunting animals with high-priced furs. These tribes of Eskimos are thinly populated, some of them on the way to extinction. Some are known as Komi here in Vorkuta. In the East, all the way to the Bering strait and the Sakhalin peninsula, they are called by different names: Nenets, Chinchi, Koriaks, Dolgans, Evenks, or the hairy Ainu.

The endless stretch of land, roamed over by these inhabitants, thousands and thousands of kilometers, strikes you as lifeless and wooded. As far as the eye can see, it is a monotonous and rugged stretch of land. The only vegetation is the mosses and lichens and, here and there, a few thorny shrubs and clumps of red or black berries, or a dwarfed birch tree. I did not see any flowers, but a few prisoners told me they were fortunate enough to see some, a kind of wild carnation and flowers like cowslips, and blue flowers.

Over there winter begins in September and lasts over two hundred days, out of which one hundred are plagued by strong, cold winds that lower the temperature from minus thirty-five degrees Celsius to minus fifty degrees Celsius. At this temperature, materials start to break like glass, at the slightest impact. The average temperature for the year is minus fifteen degrees Celsius.

Furious winds fan the snow, and visibility is dimmed to the point of blindness. The glitter of the snow blinds you, and the natives protect their eyes with round leather patches or patches made from birch tree bark, with a narrow slit in the middle. During the months of October and November daytime is one steady twilight, and during December, noon has just a bit of daylight. Then in the whole month of February, night sets in. It is Arctic night.

Only sometimes in March, a little bit of the sun starts shining,

but it blinds you at once because of the whiteness of the snow. The nights, too, are white — for black thoughts. Spring begins with overflowing waters and with birds arriving from afar. The soil stays frozen forever, to a depth of 250 to 300 meters. Only during summertime does the outer surface layer thaw to a depth of approximately one to two meters.

The natives here are called Komi, with Mongoloid features like all Eskimos: square jaws and slanted eyes. In the past they were nomads; nowadays they are more attached to their land and to their reindeer nurseries and the hunting of furred animals. They live in small tribes numbering one, or at the most two or three thousand souls, united under the designation of the Autonomous Republic of Komi. The majority of these Komi could not get along with the Soviet authorities and with the problems raised by the laws of Soviet civilization, and so they fled farther to the north, taking along their reindeer and their poverty. But civilization has kept pushing them farther and farther.

Because of the numerous inconveniences imposed upon them, the Komi eye with suspicion both the Soviet authorities and those deported here from all parts of the world. Deceived and frightened by officialdom, they showed very little hospitality, and were at any time disposed to turn in any escaped prisoner, in exchange for an insignificant monetary reward offered by the K. G. B., or to kill him in order to rob him of the few things he had left. The Komi preferred the solitude of the nomad and — as much as they could — refrained from any contacts with the Russians and their civilization.

The only solace in that monotonous landscape and the bitter cold that haunted the tundra of the Arctic Circle was the fantastic play of light and colors so characteristic of those polar regions: the entire horizon lights up in an overflow of fire and a brilliance of colors displayed in rapid succession in the most varied and unusual nuances within the spectrum of light — colors which hung in the air, seemingly suspended in an invisible cord, like fine, transparent drapes or lace curtains, with tinges of velvet violet and bluish green.

This mysterious but enchanting play of light, this profuse display of colors in the sky is the famous aurora borealis, a kind of dream curtain which sometimes succeeded in hiding hunger, evil, and pain!

In this past century, they discovered coal, oil, and iron ores and mica in these polar regions, which they started to mine.

The pioneers in this task were not people seeking adventure or quick riches — like the pioneers in Alaska or California — but political prisoners and deportees and certain war prisoners brought here by force.

In order to exploit these riches, the first political prisoners and deportees — pioneers and builders of the "socialist civilization" and brought here and left here in the cold and wind with few materials and few tools — set up the first settlements of cabins. Out of a few wooden boards and a handful of nails, a hammer, a saw-horse, a chisel and a pair of pliers, shivering in the cold and afraid of death, under the watchful eyes of the sentries, each prisoner built, first the sentry's shelter, and then his own . . . The first shipment of prisoners had died and others had been brought in — live human waves — and settlements were built; the cabins became barracks, and here and there a decent building for the K. G. B., that is, for the administration. When this was done, they had built the railroad, and, finally, sometime in 1946, they laid the grounds for the coal basin in the sad valley of Pechora — the northern Donbas — that served the metal works at Norilsk and the mining complex at Vorkuta.

But who could undertake the task of counting the dead, or of recording the agony of those whose bodies and hopes now lie buried here? Those who died here cannot be accounted for, because it was in the interest of the Soviet leadership that no documents survive. Only the tundra and its frozen lands know, but keep it a secret. No one could provide figures, no one could tell how many souls and how great was the loss paid for every brick of the buildings and furnaces raised there. But every prisoner, deportee, or war prisoner who came there knows and can tell you that under every railroad tie, two human beings lie buried. For the end of each sleeper, one soul, who hungered for bread, one soul who had toiled in want, pain, and despair. These northern railroads, about which the Soviet Union brags, are the Pyramids of the twentieth century, of the century of "socialist humanism," and of "Man's liberation from exploitation." And the dead here had no other guilt than the desire or aspiration to be free human beings . . .

THE QUARANTINE CAMP

At the time of our arrival at Vorkuta, the transfer prison had only three barracks — one isolated from the others by barbed

wire. In these barracks were women. Next to them were a few other barracks in which were crowded a few thousand obstinate and hardened criminals with over ten crimes on their records and who were to be transferred, in a short while — to the famous frozen islands, Novaya Zemlya. Here I met the murderer whose murder of 78 persons and beheading of an important courier (serving the head garnished with cabbage on a plate) had surpassed even the famous Bluebeard, the Vampire of Duesseldorf.

The Vorkuta railway station.
Camp 1, for "quarantine," is at left, in the background

Here, in the Vorkuta Prison, anyone could kill you, just for its own sake, or for amusement. People became wild animals. Even the authorities could not cope with them any more except by collusion with the fiercest of them, giving them an unrestrained free hand, and buying, in a way, their friendship and collaboration in restraining the others. Here, indeed, wolves guarded the sheep and the lambs. Here, in order to defend yourself, you had to kill.

For the secret services rendered by this collaboration, the Soviet administration would reconsider certain sentences given these monsters and substantially reduce their terms. In a way, then, officialdom nurtured criminal inclinations.

According to the Soviet press, in all its agencies and disguises, and in all the socialist states, the lower Soviet crime rate was proof of the decadence of the capitalist system. Morphine, opium, marijuana, and many other drugs are taken in the West, they said, which means, according to the Soviet press, the corruption of morals and the beginning of the end for the peoples in the Western Hemisphere. But both the Soviet press and the press of the socialist satellite countries never showed the true internal conditions and corruption in their own system. Why? If their system is so much more sound, why are there so many crimes there, and why are so many of their young people (and their number grows from year to year) addicted to drugs, dying from overdoses?

WHY DID THEY NOT WRITE ABOUT IT ?

The Soviet press never mentioned the massacre in Mine 8 in Vorkuta in 1949, a massacre carried out by eight hardened criminals who were purposely put into the camps with political and war prisoners in order to terrorize them. All this under the watchful eyes and guidance of the K. G. B. Thirty-six dead in one hour. Only this much time was needed for the eight criminals to carry out their plan. The majority of the thirty-six killed were also criminals, but belonging to other gangs. There are many such gangs in the Soviet Union. (I will not mention the small ones.)

In the Soviet Union there are a few political groups — really anti-Soviet and working underground — which are classified by the Soviet authorities as criminal gangs. However, they are not true criminals, because they act only out of political convictions and under the slogan: "As the pay, so the work."

In the history of the Soviet concentration camps, the hardened criminals and their crimes must be recorded in a separate and special place. It is indeed hardly conceivable that in a camp of more than three thousand detainees, eight people could kill anyone whom they disliked or considered their enemy. The only thing that can be said for these criminals is that they never killed their victims when they were asleep. They did have an unwritten law that the victim must face the person about to take his life. Another very interesting law among them — also unwritten — is that a wounded victim who manages to escape his killers and

takes refuge in an ambulatory hospital or a first-aid station is not followed inside these shelters, which are considered sanctuaries. In Mine 8, in the fall of 1949, when the massacre started, the eight killers entered the barracks and murdered their victims in front of the others so as to instill fear in the whole group of prisoners there. This kind of terror — by instilling the fear of death — went on with the tacit consent of the K. G. B. A K. G. B. battalion, that is, over three hundred soldiers, entered the camp intending to make the killers surrender. But they did not until after the killers had finished what they had set out to do. Every one of the eight had at least two knives, an axe or a crowbar, and when the K. G. B. got close enough, the ringleader of the criminals (his name was Kolea the Pirate), said to the soldiers: "Rookies! We have nothing to lose, but you do! If you don't want your mothers to kiss your dead bodies, go away and leave us alone. When this job is finished, we will surrender ourselves because that is our custom!"

And so they did. After finishing their killings, they went to the kitchen, asked for some food, and after that showed up at the command post, threw down their weapons, and, jokingly, asked the political officer there to give them something to smoke and a better room in the camp prison, because they intended to sleep off so much work, which had left them exhausted. Their questioning did not begin until the next day . . .

DRUGS

The consumption of drugs is widespread over the whole territory of the Soviet Union, as well as in the satellite countries; but they do not like or write about it as much as is done in the West. Instead they prefer to ignore it. In the entire Caucasus region and in all the republics east of the Caspian Sea, drugs are taken on a wide scale, under different names and in different ways. Some were brought here from China and from the Near East decades ago. In camps, drugs are brought in in parcels or, illegally, by the gang leaders (usually Georgians or Turkomans). Of course, the price for a dose is very high, and not everybody in the camp can afford this luxury, which for the most part is reserved only for those at the top.

The camp proletarians who want narcotics but cannot get them, resort to cheap improvisations which produce the same

results. If one does not have *prim* (a kind of marijuana imported from Turkmenia), he can use toothpaste. While one usually washes his teeth with toothpaste, our proletarian gargles with it and then drinks it in order to get high. This is the recipe: Pour the contents of a toothpaste tube into a glass of water and dissolve it, and it will give you as much pleasure as prim or a marijuana cigarette. If you have the desire and the means, you can drink *kefir*. (Recipe: fifty grams of black tea boiled in one hundred grams of water. Let it subside to half that amount, sweeten it to your taste, and then drink it in long sips, combining the drink with the smoking of a cigarette made out of strong tobacco, preferably *mahorka*, and wrapped in a piece of newspaper.)

The only danger with the second recipe was that the theine, the poison found in tea leaves, attacks the nervous system of the eyes and, after some time, the addict is on his way to a slow but irreversible blindness, as in the case of wood alcohol. But then it does not really matter if you are sentenced to twenty-five years.

In socialist countries, Western narcotics are sold on the black market, being brought in and introduced, for the most part, by the offspring of some of the high dignitaries in the Communist Party and in the state's leadership. In Bucharest, for example, in the lycees and universities where the children of certain high ranking ministers attend classes, narcotics are commonplace. The Bucharest police know this, but none of them has the courage to interfere and lose his job. Narcotics are sold on the black market through certain middlemen from Bucharest, Snagov, Poiana Brasov, Mamaia, and other localities. Of course, not everyone can afford this kind of luxury. Unfortunately the young people are the most threatened by the use of these drugs. But if someone dared to protest, it would be considered an act hostile to the communist state.

THE BLACK CAT

"The Black Cat" is the name of an anti-Soviet organization which grew to a considerable size in central Russia and stretched out its tentacles as far as Vladivostok. From what I could find out, within this organization there had been drawn elements from all social strata in the Soviet Union. I was told that even some dignitaries and persons of high rank in the ministries in Moscow — such as regional party secretaries — had been involved as members of this organization.

I was always interested in their methods and forms of organization, and therefore I tried some snooping, but I could not get anything out of them. All these individuals talked very little, especially about this matter.

At the end of 1951, all the prisoners in the special camps at Vorkuta received pen and paper with orders to write their autobiographies in their native language and in their own handwriting. It was strictly forbidden for the autobiography to be written by anyone else. No one understood the meaning of this action nor its scope.

In 1954, while I was in the special security camp at Holodilnik, a former officer in the guard who had been kicked out of the army and was now working as a kind of supervisor at the Superior School for Miners at Vorkuta (where I also worked) told me that this measure was ordered towards the end of 1951 and was directed against the Black Cat organization or any of its members who might be locked up at Vorkuta — an attempt to identify them by their spellings.

From the camp, these individuals would write leaflets and blackmail letters to certain persons in the political and economic circles of the Soviet Union. The authorities had discovered that all these came from the region of Vorkuta. This former officer also told me that, as far as he knew, all the measures they had taken failed to achieve the desired result, but the Soviet authorities continued to follow with great concern the spread of the Black Cat organization, especially in special security camps.

Indeed, their concern and fear was substantiated by what happened in the summer of 1955, in Camp Number 11, in Iavas, region of Potma, in the Mordvinian Republic. In February, 1955, this was one of the concentration camps for prisoners who were not Soviet nationals and who were supposed to be brainwashed and sent back to their native countries, anticipating their future influence in international political meetings there. The majority of the detainees in Iavas had been brought from the European Arctic region of the Soviet Union, where they had been accustomed to twelve months of snow. Here, at Iavas, the climate was more pleasant for them, and they were able to return to a more normal cycle of seasons.

On the camp premises there was a soccer field, and in the prison itself several soccer teams were formed. They would play according to a pre-established schedule, for a local championship in the camp. Moreover, there was a championship with a cup. Out of the six teams in the camp, after the semfinals, the

Germany I and the Hungary teams qualified for the finals. Thanks to the initiative of some young Germans and in order to create a more festive appearance to this sporting event and also to avoid any conflict with the camp administration, some poetically minded prisoners dubbed the two teams "the White Cat" and "the Black Cat."

On huge signs they painted two cats, one white and the other black, playing soccer in different attitudes, while the cup was handed over to them by a mouse. I do not recall the names of the artists or of those who suggested the idea. The fact is that those signs were raised before the beginning of the soccer match,

The Hungarian soccer team, "the Black Cat." From left to right: the author (no 4), Sandor Nagy (no 9). Iavas, August, 1955

attended by all the prisoners and also by the administration, led by Major Maiorov — the head of the K. G. B. — and by Lieutenant Yerevoi, the camp commander.

When the head of the K. G. B. saw the signs with the white and black cats, he immediately gave orders that the signs be withdrawn. Immediately after, questioning began in order to

find out wo had made the drawings and especially whose idea it was. With difficulty he was talked into believing that it was not politically motivated — that the idea of the cats had come into someone's mind by pure chance. However, because of the questioning, the approval for the game was delayed for over an hour.

Only after this incident did I realize that the Black Cat organization enjoyed a reputation and a respect even from the K. G. B.

The whole Soviet state machinery one day will have to admit — at least partially — the truth about this freedom fight by different nationalities under different organizational names.

THE JANUARY 9, 1952, DECREE

Around January 9, 1952, because the banditry and the killings had become commonplace, the Soviets issued a decree for the death penalty; death for a death, for acts of banditry, and for theft of communal property. The decree was read in front of all the prisoners, and every one of us, without exception, was made to sign that he had knowledge of the decree.

ARMAND MALOUMIAN, ARMENIAN FRENCHMAN

The new arrivals at the transfer prison in Vorkuta were locked up for quarantine purposes, in one of the three barracks for women, which had been vacated for us. The women were, in turn, crowded, all of them, into the other two barracks. Here, in the overcrowding, I again met the entire French contingent from Sachsenhausen, and also some new faces.

Jean Kostikov and Dr. Gerhardt Roenecke had arrived from Vologda at the same time with me, and Raymond Souillat had befriended a man by the name of Armand Maloumian, son of Professor Maloumian from Saint-Cloud, France, a Frenchman of Armenian descent. I heard Maloumian's story on the first evening there. This carefree heir of a great fortune was being driven to despair, and often went into a rage, cursing his own stupidity. He had gotten bored by too much comfortable living in France, where he had his own car, airplane, reputation, his father's money, and Paris — all these to have fun whenever he felt like it. But bent on meaningful activity, he had let himself be talked into repatriation to Armenia by the Soviet propaganda committees

for those of Armenian descent. And he had soon left for the promised land, the land of his forefathers. What happened after he got there he did not say, but I assume that neither his own car or his airplane from France of his childhood and youth were here available in Soviet Armenia. It is possible, maybe even certain, that somehow he protested the deprivation of his rights, that he could not get used to the austerity of the interdictions and deprivations in his new way of life. Officialdom may then have considered him too liberal, too addicted to bourgeois whims, and decided to put him in a safer place. He was arrested and sentenced to twenty-five years under the charge that he had been sent there by American intelligence. This much I know for sure.

Armand Maloumian at home in Paris, France

Also accused of spying for the Americans were: Kostikov, Souillat, Roenecke, myself, as well as many others. But who wasn't an American spy, here in the Arctic Circle; or who wasn't a traitor to the Soviet motherland? Like Ionas the Latvian, who had never had dealings with the Soviets before; like Ahasverus, the textile worker with his seventeen money coffers on his way to Minsk . . .

TO WORK

It snowed a lot, and the wind-driven snow covered the barracks. To get out we had to dig tunnels. A real performance! We did not venture beyond the barbed wire of our encampment. We had been warned by the prison security guards not to risk crossing the wires, towards those barracks reserved for criminals.

We worked hard shoveling the snow in order to have air, light, and room to walk. Those of us in quarantine were given the pleasant task of shoveling the snow around the women's barracks. We found that a few of those detained ladies had already been

chosen as "artists," amateur artists, of course — and they had improvised a theater for the cultural education of the free people, that is, the civilian and military personnel of the "official institutions" that surrounded the prison.

Materials and tools were amassed. The entire Soviet empire knew we were building feverishly, and they kept pumping supplies for the restoration and reconstruction of the country. The number of workers increased, craftsmanship developed, the eye became keen, and the taste became more refined. The dying passed their experience on to the successors, who became masters. Glaziers, carpenters, welders, mechanics, locksmiths, and all the different kinds of craftsmanship came to life here in this emptiness, in individuals who in the past had seldom seen or heard a nail being hammered into a wall.

There was a great thirst for learning and mastering skills. The construction work required qualified persons and these persons appeared overnight. If any particular skill was needed, a detainee would offer, with impertinence, to install water pipes, do the electrical wiring, install steam boilers or oxygen tanks. If there was a demand for midwives or locksmiths, they quickly appeared. Everyone had seen, or heard, or read, or retained some knowledge out of the past — generalities . . . about the operation of turbines, welding, glass polishing, or cement mixing — and promptly introduced himself as an expert. This was his only chance to escape the horrible labor with pickaxe, spade, and shovel outside in the cold and on the frozen soil.

And these improvising "craftsmen" worked strenuously at first, without making much headway and in the process damaging everything they laid hands on and then starting all over again, stubbornly, for a second time, and a third time — you could count how many times. Because the day would come when their fakery would be exposed, the prisoners toiled day and night to find some way to acquire the knowhow, sometimes finding the solution in their dreams, the way to keep up appearances and hold on to the privileges of irreplaceable specialists.

Of course, in the process much was damaged, and fortunes were wasted — yes, even the resources of human energy. Waste! A lot of human energy! Apparently the Soviet colossus was not affected. This elephant was hardly even aware of the danger. Materials poured in and were wasted. Oh, yes, they were building; they were building feverishly, and all this bustle safisfied the political leadership. They raised tall chimneys that gave forth smoke. Coal and metals were shipped away in trains, bricks were

baked in the ovens, glass was melted in glass factories, engines droned with electrical energy running through wires towards Lenin's lamps. The press, radio, the festive gatherings, the gazettes posted on walls, the ads displayed in public places intoxicated the officialdom with their praises, their dithyrambs about their industrial achievements. The Soviets did not mind the cost. When, later on, after acquiring experience and mastering the crafts to which I was assigned (I was in charge of some 130 locksmiths, tinners, milling operators, lathe operators, planners, and grinders), driven by common sense and a sense of decency I confessed to some personal failures and waste of materials. The Soviet specialist in charge of the whole operation (in truth he knew less than I did, but always boasted about his expertise) told me frankly: "Don't worry! We have plenty! Much more than you can imagine!"

The press, radio, and the official reports concerning the five-year plan sang praises about the well-being of the people and the advancement of the newly rising industries. But nobody saw, nobody had any interest in seeing that all this waste meant a tremendous economic loss, and was constantly pushing down the standard of living. A profit on waste in one place meant, according to mathematical law, a loss somewhere else.

The ordinary Russian citizen did not get meat, and he ate boiled bran. He had only one shirt and boots made from woven lime-tree twigs or shoes made of cloth sewed onto birchwood soles. He received only one or two rubles per working day at the collective farm, two kilograms of potatoes per month in exchange for a maximum of 120 workdays a year. He had only a miserable hut where he lived with his wife and his little Ivans crowded together. His wife, working alongside him, had only one dress, a shabby gown. He was not allowed to leave his village without a written pass from the Party, and if they sent him away to do reconstruction work, he was sure to be forgotten by his superiors, and left at the opposite, far end of the country, where he had no choice but to get himself another wife. He was depressed, dirty, and almost naked, pressured by all kinds of wants, which had to balance all the wastes, indolences, incompetences, and thefts somewhere else — theft, a serious problem, by warehousemen, members of brigades, important supervisors, and all those who somewhere were in charge.

HOCUS-POCUS

For the moment putting aside the clumsiness and the incompetence of these self-constituted craftsmen and engineers, and restricting ourselves to theft (the famous "hocus-pocus" or disappearing act), one might have wondered who would pay for the three sets of expensive tiles which disappeared and were reordered three times in a row, just for the construction of a stove in the waiting room of a railway station by the name of Sonika in the taiga. The loss here was recovered off an Ivan's back, somewhere else in the Soviet Union.

Who could disclose all the many instances of such hocus-pocus — unseen except to the perpetrators? And when all the perpetrators, each taking his turn, are the two hundred thousand millions of souls who steal rapaciously from the "collectively" owned goods, trying to patch up their puny livelihood? . . .

Who could total all the waste and damage done by incompetence, improvisation, and lack of any vision in these dull individuals, unable to plan properly, unable to supervise at any level and in any position?

It is hard to uncover all the defects, to list them in detail and in their complexity. How many tens of thousands or millions of items of all kinds of merchandise never reached their destination, or were used for purposes for which they were never intended?

If the huge state apparatus whose function it is to keep track of all public goods were to fight with all its might and main against obfuscation and vanity, against corruption and indolence, and then boast about achievements, what could not have been accomplished with all the resources and working forces at Magnitogorsk, Dniepropetrovsk, Uralets, Novosibirsk, Norilsk, Donbas, or Vorkuta? How much excavating was done at Magnitogorsk? How many cubic meters of earth dredged for the channel from the White Sea to the Baltic? . . . How much flour, butter, canned goods, shirts, boots, and oil have been smuggled from Sonika or Arzamas into the black markets of Gorky or Moscow? How about Leningrad? What kinds of furs? What furniture made from the woods smuggled in through Murmansk or Arkhangelsk was sold? Or how many chess sets carved by the prisoners in Vologda and Vorkuta were put secretly on sale?

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Vorkuta is located in an Arctic region where winter lasts for twelve months. Whatever is left from the twelve months is summer. Almost everyone who had heard of Vorkuta had gotten certain ideas about the living conditions there, and especially about the clothing which the prisoners wore. Many of my acquaintances with whom I had talked — and who had read extensively about polar expeditions and about the life of the Eskimos, visualized (when it came to Vorkuta) people dressed in furs and other warm clothing if they were to survive the merciless climate. But for the prisoner in this Soviet camp (regardless of classification: political prisoner, prisoner of war, deportee, or common criminal), the clothing was, generally speaking, whatever he had on. Of course, there were exceptions, but these were insignificant. Between the clothing of the political prisoners of 1945, 1950, or 1955 there was only the slightest difference in quality.

In the years just before the war and immediately after the war, most prisoners, and especially those who worked on the grounds, had one set of clothing both for work and for the cell or barracks. The same was true for the miners in the coal mines. Between 1950 and 1951, the miners received a second set of clothes to be worn when they were underground. For the most part, these clothes came from the storage rooms of the army where they no longer needed. Until 1950, however, in most Soviet camps, and especially at Vorkuta, each prisoner wore just the one set of clothing, twenty-four hours out of twenty-four hours. Even when they were sleeping, the prisoners had to keep this set of clothing on because there were no bedsheets, mattresses, or blankets.

As a prisoner, you undressed only when you were taken to take a bath, usually two or three times a month, but not in all camps. Sometimes you were "undressed" by a common criminal who had happened to lose his clothes in a game of cards, or if you had died. In special security camps, private clothing was, as a matter of fact, forbidden. In fact, almost everyone sold articles of clothing or had been stripped of some article of wear, or had it stolen from him. Beginning in 1951, at the store houses for clothes, new clothing began to arrive, of very poor quality. Generally speaking, the clothing of a prisoner in the special

security camps at Vorkuta consisted of the following (each article with a tag showing duration of wear): (1) shirt and yellow underpants (two sets, each set having a number printed on it — one set to be always worn by the prisoner, the other to be kept in the shower room storage closet, where it was changed every two weeks; most of these sets had been acquired from army supplies); (2) fur cap with ear flaps "a la russe" provided with protectors from the frost (these, too, for the most part, came from army supplies); (3) padded coat (cotton-padded and short); (4) padded coat called *bushlat* that covered the body almost to the knees; (5) cotton-padded trousers; (6) special boots made out of old cotton-padded cloth (protected from moisture by some kind of fit-over moccasins made from tire rubber, most of them carrying markings "made in U. S. A.").

All of the above items were given for a period of two years. To the above were added: a pair of mittens (made from the same material as the clothes), for one year; and a pair of foot wrappings made from rags — socks "a la russe" — for six months.

The above mentioned were all that 80 to 90 percent of prisoners had. The other 10 to 15 percent had the luck to be the owners of pullover sweaters or shirts which they had not already sold.

In conclusion, there were no socks, furs, or warm clothing made from wool. And in these death camps, the clothing was of much lower quality than in the Nazi concentration camps.

BOUGHT "ENGLISH STYLE"

In the Vorkuta camps there were instances when the Soviet soldiers and their officers, and even generals, took possession of prisoners' personal belongings, or let the prisoners make some artifacts which later on they appropriated and sold for their personal profit. I myself was involved in such a case, which proved to be a headache to the authorities in Camp 2, as well as to the supreme commander of all the Vorkuta death camps.

In the summer of 1951, several persons in our camp approached me, tempting me with goodies — special beverage, cigarettes, and food — to sell them a woolen white pullover sweater which I had managed to save during my transfer through Moscow thanks to my friend there, Pyotr Ivanovich (as I have mentioned earlier). But all their attempts to persuade me to sell failed. I categorically refused. At that time I was working in a brigade assigned different

jobs, from shoveling snow on the railroad tracks to construction or repair work on buildings. Because I had this visible infirmity of my left hand (from war wounds and aggravated by the generosity of my unforgettable friend Major Hirsch Gorin in Potsdam), the medical commission assigned me to light work, that is, shoveling snow. An order from Moscow put me into a group who were not allowed to leave the premises of the camp. Moreover, during holidays such as May 1, Miners' Day (last Sunday in August), November 7, and December 21, for three days before to one day after each holiday, members of my group were put into a special building, with the right to smoke and eat "human" food — isolating us from the anti-Soviet demonstrations which sometimes happened on these days. I would like to point out that during such holidays, slogans, leaflets, and even acts of sabotage (done individually or by groups) would be seen. To avoid such "delinquency," the authorities would take precautionary measures. It was obviously believed that people like myself, once associated with these "evil doers," would hardly have responded to the spirit and wishes of the Soviet administration for our "re-education." Of course, many of us did not participate in these activities, but we could have.

In my brigade, where our task was to shovel snow, the work was done as follows: One group shoveled the snow while two other groups warmed up nearby, playing dominoes. The losers automatically became the next shift. Of course, not everybody could "afford this luxury," preferring not to be put in the special building . . . In 1952, for instance, I remained in this special building and in the isolation room for three and a half months, with brief interruptions. When I had the time, I would go and work as a dishwasher or clean-up hand in the kitchen, in order to get food. I was able to get these jobs only through special connections. During one of these work periods I was informed that the soldiers had searched our barracks thoroughly. The chief immediately asked me to come over. After my arrival I found out that during the search they had taken my two pullovers. One was the white one I have just mentioned, and the other was a sleeveless one I had made myself — from a Norwegian pattern — from woolen remnants, an art I had learned at Bautzen.

The barracks chief told me that my pullovers, as well as those of other prisoners, and shirts, which the soldiers had confiscated, had been taken to the special building where they had been delivered to him and his helpers, after pinning a piece of paper with our name on it, on each item. I went immediately to the

special building, but there I was told that my things had been locked up in a cell and that the key was with the sergeant in charge, who at that time was off duty and had left the camp and could not be found until the next day.

All those prisoners from whom items had been taken during that search were fuming. We gathered in a group and went to the political officer and complained about this outrageous act, performed upon orders from the camp authorities. Our complaint was based upon the fact that they had taken warm clothes which were badly needed in this northern Arctic region and where the authorities had not provided us adequate wear. To quiet us down, the political officers told us that it was a mistake, and that each of us should come to the special building to pick up his things in person.

Ferry between "shifts . . ."
Vorkuta, 1952

The next day we showed up at the designated place, where, with regrets, I found out that both of my pullovers had disappeared for the second time. I was not the only one in that predicament. Unwilling to give up, I went directly to the camp commander and let him know my complaint. After listening to me, he told me to put the complaint in writing and address it to him personally. He assured me I was not to be afraid that I would not get my things back.

From that day on, on every occasion I could, I complained to each camp officer and even to strangers who visited our camp. All the heads in the camp administration knew my case by heart, and they continued to give me assurances, repeatedly, that they were investigating and that my things would be returned.

Six months passed, and my pullovers still could not be found. They were still investigating. I did not give up, and in a conversation with the political officer, Major Lieutenant Prokhurov, in the camp dining room, in front of hundreds of people, I told him bluntly that I would not withdraw my complaint, and that at the first opportunity, on the arrival of a commission from Moscow, I would let them know of the wrong done to me, regardless of the consequences I might suffer at the hands of the local authorities. (Some had long ago given up trying to recover the things stolen from them.)

Shortly thereafter, a new commotion arose among the camp administration. Every one of them was running to and fro, giving orders to clean and straighten things up. Then we were told that the new supreme commander of special political camps in Vorkuta was coming to assume his new position, visiting each camp separately in order to acquaint himself with the situation and with the commanders. Coming across Major Lieutenant Prokhurov accidentally, I asked him if he had heard anything more about my pullovers, and then I told him that I would complain to the new supreme commander when he arrived at our camp. First, by word of mouth, in front of the entire commission, and then, if necessary, in writing, I would submit my complaint to him. Undoubtedly this would cast a shadow, no matter how small, upon the administration of our camp.

Prokhurov said to me: "In ten days I shall solve your problem one way or another. But do not complain! Otherwise I will deal with you personally!" I said: "You have had plenty of time to solve the matter. I will not back down in spite of all your threats!"

The big day came. Major General Dirivenko, the new supreme commander, accompanied by his staff, came to take possession of Camp Number 2 and of Mine Number 7. As I found out later, Major General Dirivenko had also been a member of the Political Military Commission of the Soviet Union at the talks with the Japanese upon their surrender in Manchuria and, later on, at the talks in Vladivostok. He was a tall man, looking well built in his military uniform. As I found out from the former military men who had known him in the army, he was also a man of culture. Every bit of information I had garnered about this man enhanced our potential to figure him out, and especially to consider possible approaches to him for improvement of our condition as political prisoners.

In the camp that day everything was straightened, clean and neat. The soldiers and the officers waited feverishly for the inspection to be over as quickly as possible. In the last few days prior to this visit, the meals improved considerably, and in the

dining hall we were served on tables covered with white table cloths, which were immediately changed as soon as they got dirty.

I must say that the introduction of white table cloths and flowers on the table is an old Soviet trick, deeply rooted in the history of their death camps. It was always resorted to when the camps were inspected by a commission. More frequently it occurred when the camps for prisoners of war were sometimes visited by foreign commissions, who were shown the good and happy life led by prisoners of war in the Soviet Union . . . But as soon as the last member of the foreign commission left the camp premises, both table cloths and flowers disappeared, and the good food was replaced by the customary daily broth known as *balanda*.

This was happening at Vorkuta, and not for the first time. Therefore, when the rumor about the new supreme commander spread, everyone was hoping for a change in camp life. It was well known that these commissions were merely performing a duty just by being present and that the inspection would be done as quickly as possible. The stopovers would be as brief as possible in order to save time for the banquet always given by the camp administration to ingratiate itself with that particular commission.

The entrance into our camp by the commission, led by Dirivenko, started with a greeting at the camp gate by all the administrative staff, led by the camp commander, Major Malik, by the chief of the K. G. B. operational group, by Major Lieutenant Prokhurov, and by the head of the medical team, Captain Sergeevna Grishchina. It turned out to be a big surprise both for the prisoners and for the administration. The commission categorically refused to enter first the headquarters building where a meeting was supposed to be held, in accordance with the old Soviet custom. Instead, the commission proceeded directly to the inspection of the camp, its assignment.

They started with the barracks reserved for slicing bread, and then went on to the medical administration barracks, with its consultation rooms, and finally to the isolation room where their stopover was very brief. They stayed longer at the camp club, where with graphs and posters, the work performed by the club was exhibited. They were also shown an entire collection of paintings and cartoons, some of them copies of famous paintings, others, original, mostly inspired by the miners' life at Vorkuta.

Undoubtedly Dirivenko was very well acquainted with Russian and world paintings, because he listened attentively to the comments, making his own observations and sometimes with praise for a well known work of art. The majority of his staff, however, appeared not to have any ideas about art. Furthermore, Dirivenko congratulated the artist who had executed the paintings — Julius Stuermer, a Romanian painter of German descent.

The commission then went on to the commissary, then to the bootmakers' and tailors' shops, and after that, in great haste, they visited a few barracks where the prisoners lived. The last stopovers were the shower room, the barber's shop, and the kitchen with the dining hall. During all this time, several groups of soldiers formed a kind of vanguard to keep anyone from getting near the commission. The prisoners followed the whole tour, at a distance. Up to this point the plan to isolate the prisoners and prevent any contacts between them and the commission was well implemented, and strictly enforced. However, once in the dining hall, the strategy began to come apart, since the dining hall was filled with prisoners who were having their meal and were about to leave for work in the next shift.

When the general asked the prisoners if the food was good, and after they all together answered in the affirmative, some of the commission indulged in the luxury of showing their great sympathy by tasting from the tureens. Cracking some good jokes, they admired the good quality of the food, and praised the cook and especially the chef, who was present. A good joke at the expense of the chef made all the prisoners laugh, along with the commission. These were smiles in the face of adversity. If the visit could end with jokes and laughter on both sides, it was a sign that everything was ending well and that the administration had passed the examination with flying colors. Major Lieutenant Prokhurov tried to catch his breath as he wiped the sweat from his face. Then he was stunned to see me coming out of the crowd and approaching the new supreme commander, asking to make a complaint. Prokhurov winked, a sign to me to keep my mouth shut, but I shook my head at him, meaning "no," I was going to keep my promise. In the dining hall a dead silence fell as everyone waited to find out what the answer by the new commander would be to my complaint, which by now was known to most of the prisoners.

After the general gave me permission to speak, I started to tell the whole story down to the smallest detail — the story of the two purloined pullovers, now completely disappeared. Not

only I, but all those in the dining room realized that the general was not paying the least attention to what I was reporting. He stared at a huge, well known painting in the hall representing the Ukrainian folk hero Taras Bulba misrepresented by Soviet history as a friend of the Russians. Disappointed by his reaction and especially by this slap in the face and the consequences of my failure, a last-minute crazy idea crossed my mind. I jocularly asked the general,

"Mr. General, I never thought, and I could never imagine that Soviet soldiers and even Soviet officers were specially trained to buy 'English style.' " (This was a Russian coinage, to be found also in other languages, from the Boer War in South Africa and meaning something taken unjustly from you.)

This time he heard me and turned toward me, looking me up and down several times. His mild features suddenly turned rigid, and he frowned. Then he turned to his aide and said:

"Before we leave this camp I want a detailed report and a clarification on this complaint!"

Then, turning to me, he said, "Everything will be straightened out, young man!" and left the dining room with the commission.

His aide, a K. G. B. colonel, spoke with me directly and took down all the necessary notes, then told me to stay in my barracks where he could find me, because very soon he would call for me.

After the colonel's departure, Prokhurov, who was lingering in the dining hall, approached me and said:

"You did it to me! We'll talk about this later!"

Then he left the dining hall amidst the noisy laughter of the prisoners.

But soon they made the place too hot for me! In only two hours I was called to headquarters by the colonel, and after a long questioning with comings-in and goings-out, they made me a proposition: They would give me 140 rubles now that the pullovers were gone. The money would be put into an account and paid out of the salary of the sergeant who had done the search.

The money was indeed put into my account, but it brought me no satisfaction because I could get it only at the expiration of my prison term of twenty-five years, and I had served only a very little of that time so far. Actually the money never got to me, because in September, 1953, at my new trial, I was sentenced to pay the attorney's fees, to the amount of 250 rubles. He was an attorney "appointed" by the court. I had only 140 rubles in my account, so I was still 110 rubles in debt, plus another fine of 600,000 rubles for my part of the responsibility

as a member of the Committee of Five that led the Vorkuta strike.

Enlightened minds, indeed, these members of the court, who still hoped to extract this amount of money from me when I was not even sure I would survive the day because of so many sentences and debts!

After this, I had a lot of hard times from Major Lieutenant Prokhurov.

I talked with Dirivenko once more, face to face; only this time he was the one humiliated and I was speaking as spokesman for the political prisoners, deportees, and prisoners of war in Camp 2, Mine 7. He recognized me immediately and, wanting to show how much he cared for our fate, drew my attention to and reminded me of the speed with which he had solved my problem of the pullovers, a problem which the camp administration had not solved over a period of six months. He was right, but this time we had another ball game going: not my personal problems or the problems of just one group of people, but the fate of all the political prisoners in Soviet concentration camps.

I was reminded of my use of the phrase "bought English style" under unusual circumstances, by one of the superior staff members in the Kremlin, at a questioning in Moscow, in front of the government's commission for the 1953 events at Vorkuta. All laughed heartily when I told them briefly about the reaction there of Dirivenko.

All these weaknesses in this huge colossus that is the Soviet empire, all these deprivations alongside the excesses, were part of the general bureaucratic decadence of the soul.

MILLIONS, MILLIONS, MILLIONS . . .

Magnitogorsk, as well as Azovstal, was immense. But the surpluses of material and the wasted energy there could have made two, three, or who knows how many other Magnitogorsks and Azovstals.

If one were to keep records of the clothing, the toys, the meat, the plows, the books and tractors, the steel and the bread, the births and the deaths, and at the same time look at Soviet propaganda efforts to demonstrate the well being and the prosperity, he would only come up with tragic bankruptcy and sad misery. The endless lines for meat, milk, cheese, shoes and clothing; the shop windows decorated with plastic imitations (and nicely

colored) of cheese, bread, salami, and groceries; the naked beggars in the streets; the hungry with their kettles tied to their belts and their spoons slipped into their boots, tight against the skin — all are witnesses to the failure of a system.

Protest, strikes? Soviet doctrine and Soviet progaganda tell the people that they do not have to revolt, for they are the masters of the factories and of all the land . . . And if there are contradictions, they are surely not the fault of the system of government, as in the capitalist-bourgeois society!

If someone still wishes to raise his voice in protest against deprivations and abuse; if this same person does not go to the meetings and scream his lungs out with communist slogans, does not applaud and does not vote for those on the list handed him, he must be the class enemy of those who are building the new society and fighting for the consolidation of revolutionary conquests. He must be an imperialist agent, a traitor to the Socialist motherland, and an American spy . . . And all such turncoats of the imperialists must be discovered, exposed, and handed over to the people's justice.

And the people's justice keeps on doing its duty conscientiously, and continues to see that the revolutionary achievements are strictly preserved. So tens of millions of traitors to the motherland are taken out from the midst of the workers and banished. The line is endless. Banished to the periphery of life, into death camps, prisons, and so-called reeducation camps! Gorky is full of such camps; Vologda, Vorkuta, Omsk, Karaganda, the length of the Volga, Norilsk, the Valdai Plateau, Donets, Pechora, Vladimir, Potma, Riazan, Uhta, Kazakhstan, all of the taiga and the tundra.

The Soviet Union is full of traitors and spies, xenophiles, remnants of the bourgeois-capitalist society . . . Millions, millions, millions!

I cannot help but recall that nostalgic tune of the Soviet composer Dunaevsky, parodied by those around me in such a loud voice that the tundra echoed it:

> Forever my beloved country,
> Now filled with prison camps,
> There never was a more unhappy land,
> Never was and never will be.

The tundra resounded and the souls calmed down. However, a slave can love his country as it is. These slaves were hoping that

their misfortunes would pass away, and they kept saying the old words, "It doesn't matter! There will be light!"

Joining the indigenous detainees and Russian deportees, came the prisoners of war; then came the deportees and detainees from territories outside Russia, from the occupied territories. Those who died had to be replaced, in these forced-labor camps in the Soviet Union.

TURNING TO OTHER SKILLS

As I have already said, people specialized in the different crafts kept tightly to them. But from time to time they turned to other skills. Everyone did as many things as possible to make life easier for himself. How much was it worth to keep to one's specialty, and what was the result? Quality? God have mercy on the quality of the goods made! Things were made helter-skelter purposely so as to last only from day to day. Then there were the delays. Faked sick leaves. Since nothing belonged to anyone, that is, it all belonged to the Soviet state, this giant amoeba.

The women cooks became artists, the artists became cooks, whores became nurses, and virtuous women became whores. A Socrates became a glazier, a thug became head of a construction site; a Catholic priest, a cleaner of toilets; a horseman from the national cavalry, a welder; professors became carpenters, stovemakers, or tinners; a haughty general, a foreman of a team working on the railroad; a German major (about whom we shall say more later), a cleaning man in the office of an officer; an aviator, the manager of the electrical energy works; an architect specialized in urban construction, a gardener; some fifteen colonels, a team of masons; etc., etc. Who could count the number of the former professions? This readjustment of professions and crafts was universal, and sometimes funny.

As I have already observed, on the day of our confinement it snowed a lot and we were taken out to shovel it, first around the snow-buried barracks where the women were kept. This forced labor was a means of getting used to the weather. We were held loose in the harness, as American cowboys do with their unbroken mustangs. This policy brought us some relaxation, since we had been behind bars so long, in complete darkness and inactivity.

As I had also observed earlier, in the little town of Vorkuta, at the suggestion of the interested authorities, the women

prisoners had improvised an amateur theater for the pleasure of the free people, that is, those in charge of the camp and the civilian and military personnel.

SON OF THE SEA

"Son of the Sea" is the nickname of an amateur poet in the Romanian Merchant Marine before World War II. Now in the year 1950 of our gracious Lord, I came across this very same poet, originally from Bessarabia but now here in the Vorkuta camp. He had been sentenced to twenty years after being charged with treason to the motherland. Which motherland? Romania was his true country. He had served in the Romanian army, in the Romanian Merchant Marine, and for this he had to pay the price. He was the son of a priest, Singureanu, in a village north of Cetatea Alba, called to the priesthood here by the spirit of adventure and love of the sea breeze. The son had secretly left the seminary where he had been enrolled as a sixth-grade student, and, taking his fate into his own hands, had enslisted in the Romanian Merchant Marine.

He had roamed the seas to every corner of the earth, and knew all the harbors of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean — each with its peculiar beauties and its slums. The memories of his life as a sailor were so many and so funny that we often gathered in his barracks to listen to his stories. He now worked in the so-called "Stroikontor," a construction brigade, and he slept in the bunk next to the Frenchman Pater Jean Nicolas (about whom more later).

In the fall of 1951, the blizzard came early, and everyone had no choice but to spend more time in his barracks, sometimes with others, sometimes by himself, musing upon his fate. One such evening I stopped over at the sailor's barracks because he was smart enough not to deceive himself with false hopes. He wouldn't buy the Soviets' nonsense.

He told me a lot about his travels, and when Pater Jean was not there, I had permission to sit on his bunk. Often we were joined by Ion Dragos, a freedom fighter also from Bessarabia, the thorn in the flesh of the K. G. B., and Vasile I. Gheorghe (we shall meet these two again). When talking we forgot all about the hell in which we found ourselves. On this particular evening Gheorghe left us earlier because he had to get ready for his shift, and the rest of us stayed longer, talking over our problems, in

Romanian.

We tried never to disturb anyone or do anything which would raise eyebrows. A new neighbor in one of the bunks above, a Russian who sometimes was a bit of a provocateur (he was also a common criminal), began to berate us for talking in Romanian. Why didn't we talk in Russian so the others could understand us, too? This was not the first time that somebody had picked on us, but we had always tried to avoid incidents which could turn out bloody. Therefore, Ion, the most aggressive of us, walked away so as to avoid any trouble, but before leaving he solemnly promised the Russian (using the "scientific" Soviet vocabulary in vogue at the camp), that he would settle things with him later. After Ion had left (as I said, he was known for his aggressiveness, so the Russian kept his mouth shut), then the Russian exploded and spat on us.

Singureanu, the priest's son, was reputedly a quiet boy, who never got involved in the brawls which often broke out spontaneously within different groups in the camp. Seeing that we did not react, the Russian raised his voice even higher, so everyone could hear him, and insulting everything dear to us, from our mothers to our motherland. Since Singureanu could not stand it any longer, he got up and asked the Russian to shut up, politely because he did not want to provoke an incident, aware that the Russians there were superior in numbers. But the Russian was still not satisfied, and suddenly kicked Singureanu in the mouth, knocking him into the middle of the barracks, where he landed in a group of men chatting over by the stove.

Before the others in the barracks could figure out what was happening, the Russian had been pulled down by us (he was wearing only his shirt and his underwear shorts), beaten up, and stomped on like a Romanian peasant woman pounding a churn. We risked a lot in doing this, because the other Russians, realizing what was happening, though too late, tried to come to his aid. We might have been lynched, but the entrance of the soldiers making their usual rounds saved the Russians and, most likely, saved us too.

LOCKED UP IN ISOLATION

For the incident, at least until it had been investigated and the culprits identified, Singureanu (who had started the fight) and I (who had taken his side even though we belonged to different

work teams and different barracks), were locked up in the isolation building, in cell 3, until the next day, when the political officer would straighten the whole affair out.

We took up our new abode, feeling our sore spots and trying to ease the pain with massaging like two dogs licking their wounds. We had been soundly beaten even before we got into the cell, which was an empty room, three by three meters, with a double bunk on the right side (as you faced it from the doorway). In the left corner there was a bucket, our portable toilet, which was taken out only at certain times by one of the individuals in the cell. Sometimes these buckets were provided with a piece of cardboard as a cover to prevent the spreading of the stink. When the cell was overcrowded, as it often happened, the tenant to be most severely punished was the one who had to sleep near the bucket.

A 60 by 40 centimeter window with five round iron bars (eighteen millimeters thick) on the inside, prevented any escape. On the outside there was a wooden shield that covered the window and prevented anyone from looking out. Through one crack one could only watch the clouds in the sky during the day, and the shining stars at night.

In the right corner there was a stove opening, heated from the corridor outside. The fire in the stove was built by the supervisor of the building, twice a day, for a half hour each time. The reader can understand how cozy it was in that cell. Each cell had a floor made of planks, whereas the punishment rooms had concrete floors and no bunks.

After we had looked all around us and saw all the misery here where we now had to accommodate ourselves, we got closer to the stove and were pleased to discover that the walls were still warm. Then we made a cigarette for each of us from some genuine Russian tobacco and some paper torn from the famous newspaper *Pravda*.

As we entered the cell, we were superficially searched by the guard, who looked only for side arms, knives, daggers, or awls. Seated on the bunk with our feet against the walls of the stove, we found out, to our satisfaction, that the wall could be moved; and we were able to pull out a few bricks to make a hole and let the heat come directly into the cell. In the stove were only embers slowly dying out, so we put our feet into the hole in order to benefit from the least bit of warmth, aware of the fact that the fire would not be rekindled until the next day. The bricks which we had taken out were put back very carefully

so as not to damage the plaster. The hole in the stove was undoubtedly the inspiration of a previous tenant. Through painful and meticulous labor, using some kind of sharp object, he had pulled out a brick with hardened plaster on it, in order to get a light for his cigarette, or just to get warm. The whole job had been well concealed.

After a lengthy discussion about why we were here and after preparing, down to the smallest detail, the answers we would give to the political officers, we then turned to idle chat. Among other topics we came around to discussing the new project of the Soviets to build a statue of Lenin in front of the cultural headquarters of Mine Number 7. The project specified that the statue be cast in bronze, life size, on a granite base and placed right in front of the building. Suddenly Singureanu became silent as if in deep meditation; and after taking a deep whiff from his cigarette, he started to roar with laughter and said, "My friend, they are doing a smart thing in making the bronze statue of Lenin, because some day someone will pull Lenin down from his pedestal and sell him as scrap metal, as the Romanian marines did with a similar statue, also of Lenin, in Sevastopol. They sold the metal in Constantza, Romania, and it brought in a lot of money. You don't know the story? Let me tell it to you . . .

LENIN SOLD AS SCRAP IRON

"Fierce fights were waged for the taking of Sevastopol," Singureanu began, "especially because Sevastopol had an entrenchment of several forts which could be easily defended and hard to storm. The German commander began by concentrating the greatest firepower of the heavy artillery on this entrenchment. The defensive line of the Soviets was bombed day and night. But only due to the praiseworthy initiative of the Romanian captain, Sergiu Glavcea, who with his batallion penetrated the entrenchment by resorting to a trick, could the Soviet line be broken for the first time in its history. The enemy was taken from behind and this gave the larger units the opportunity to advance and eventually to cause the fall of the forts, one after the other. For this daring deed, Captain Glavcea was decorated with the highest Romanian medal, the order of Michael the Brave.

"What is not so well known or may not be mentioned at all is the fact that the first flag raised as a sign of victory over

Sevastopol was the Italian flag. But the Italians did not have fighting troops there, except for the few officers attached to the Romanian and German commands. When the last warship in the Soviet convoy evacuating Sevastopol left the harbor, a flotilla of fast Italian gunboats (which had kept at a distance because they were no match for the huge Soviet warships) was the first to enter the waters of the Sevastopol harbor. And while the Romanian and German troops were fighting to clean up the last resistance posts, an officer of the Italian navy took the flag of his gunboat and raised it on the harbor flagpole, to the cheers of the Italian marines. Their joy, however, was shortlived. Warmed up by the fierce fighting, the Romanian troops took the harbor, lowered the Italian flag, and raised the Romanian instead. By this time the Italian gunboats had already left the harbor to spread the good news, as eyewitnesses of the fall of Sevastopol. That was why there was no Italian resistance to the Romanian action. The new flag, the Romanian, was also cheered loudly. In its turn, it was replaced by the flag of the German Reich, filmed from all sides by the special propaganda team at the front. So as not to create any friction, the Romanian and the German officers decided that both flags should fly high on the flagpole.

"Commercial ships in the Romanian harbor of Constantza — now turned into cargo ships for transporting war materials supplying the front — were urgently ordered to Sevastopol. The Romanian troops could be supplied in a matter of a few hours by this short route, and the same ships could return with materials abandoned by the Soviets. After unloading supplies at Sevastopol late at night, the Romanian sailors were allowed shore leave. Both in the harbor itself and in the city there was great elation and merriment. The party got going with the seizing of some big Soviet military depots which the Soviets could not blow up in the fast advance of the Romanian and German troops. A huge storage house with alcoholic beverages was discovered.

"Our ship's crew had been together for years even before the Russian attack on Romania that started our war with them. Therefore we knew each other very well. As with any crew, we had unruly sailors who were good professionals and comrades in arms. One of them was the son of a Romanian general. However, he had wanted to live his own life and stand on his own two feet and not walk in the shadow of his father. Two of these sailors went ashore. A third stayed on watch on the deck. The two, after visiting all the bars which had sprung up like mushrooms after rain, arrived at the public square in the harbor. In the middle of the square, now occupied by Romanian and German troops, the general's son, who had the rank of sergeant, got a funny idea after watching a drunken Romanian soldier with a bottle of vodka in his hand, talking to the statue of Lenin (whose hand was raised in a Hitler-like salute): 'You are a Nazi now, comrade Lenin. I see you greet me with the outstretched hand. If you are thirsty I have something for you right here, but you must come down . . . '

"The words 'come down' suddenly struck the sergeant's fancy. He ran to the ship and came back immediately with a coil of rope in his hands. Then he climbed up the statue and tied Lenin's neck with one end of the rope. Then he threw the other end down, and climbed down from the statue and told his friend there to stop a group of Romanian soldiers passing by and led by a corporal. He explained to them that by the order of the new military commander of the city of Sevastopol, the statue of Lenin had to be taken down that very moment and at night, so as not to be seen by the civilian population, and it was to be taken away to a safe place. Then he offered the corporal a forty-lei tip, and to each soldier he promised twenty lei, asking them to pull Lenin down with the rope.

"When the corporal and his soldiers heard about the tips and the order, they agreed immediately to do the job. Moreover, they volunteered to carry Lenin to the safe place as indicated. For this additional labor, the sergeant promised to double their tips.

"After a few pulls, Lenin fell off his pedestal and the only damage done to him was the breaking off of the hand stretched out in the Nazi-like salute. In such a condition, Lenin was dragged down to the shore, not far from the sergeant's shop. Lenin's trip across the square and through the streets of Sevastopol down to the shore took place without incident. All those whom they encountered along the way were either drunk or pretended not to see what was going on. The two pranksters, helped by the third, who, as we recall, was on watch at the ship, lifted him up with a crane and lowered him gently into a lifeboat. Then they covered him with a blanket to protect him from sunburn the next day.

"The next day at dawn the ship left Sevastopol and headed back towards Constantza. Once there, the three sailors had to wait for the right moment to remove Lenin from the harbor, undetected. Preparing for the worst, the three wrapped Lenin's body in bandages, from head to toe, to eventually explain that

he was a comrade in arms who had been wounded. This was their well devised plan.

"While most of the sailors were ashore on leave, a few Soviet planes appeared above the city and dropped some bombs over the harbor. No sooner was the air raid alarm sounded than an ambulance driven at a crazy speed entered the harbor zone to pick up a wounded person for which the hospital had received an emergency phone call. When the paramedic was at the point of administering first aid to the wounded person, the three sailors, with tears in their eyes and cursing the Soviets for the wounds inflicted upon their comrade, pushed the paramedic aside, telling him that there were other wounded persons to be picked up and that they were properly trained to attend to this one. Then they grabbed the stretcher upon which their comrade, bandaged, had been laid. Spots of blood could be seen on the bandages (from a few hens on board the ship, whose throats had been cut to sprinkle the bandages with their blood). Then they placed the paramedic next to the driver and went with the stretcher to the back of the ambulance, where, still, weeping, they gave the go signal. At the harbor's checkpoint, the ambulance got immediate clearance, after the sentry took a look at the wounded person wrapped in bloody bandages with three weeping sailors sitting beside him.

"As soon as they got to the front of the hospital, the sailors told the driver to stop and advised him and the paramedic to return urgently to the harbor to pick up the other two or three wounded individuals. They would, of course, assume full responsibility for this comrade and take him inside the hospital through a short cut.

"The ambulance speeded back to the harbor, and the three sailors picked up the stretcher with their comrade covered completely with a blanket. They took him a few blocks beyond the hospital into the front yard of a building on whose gate one could read the following on a huge sign: 'Scrap Iron and Non-Ferrous Metals Bought and Sold.'

"A few days later there was a lot of movement on board the ship. Every corner was thoroughly washed and cleaned. It was announced that there would be a visit by a big shot from the Romanian Admiralty. The reason was still unknown. At the designated time, a group of superior officers, among them the military commander of Constantza harbor, showed up. The crew had been waiting on deck, and the captain gave the required report. Taking over, one of the superior officers of the

Admiralty praised the captain and the entire crew for their fine execution of their military missions. He also mentioned the fact that the Admiralty of the Romanian Navy could not tolerate such acts as the selling of the statue of Lenin to a scrap-iron shop in Constantza. The Admiralty was requesting the immediate release of the names of those involved in the matter. Both the captain and the entire crew were dumbfounded at the news. Meanwhile, a jeep pulled up on shore, right in front of the ship, and a general of the Romanian army got out and came on deck. The entire officers' corps stood at attention. The general turned to the crew, who were still there, raised his right hand in which he carried the usual whip, and pointed to the sergeant who was his son, saying: 'Come here, Master Sergeant, and report to me, your father, how you sold Lenin as scrap metal!'

"The sergeant turned pale, and it was obvious he was not happy at this direct confrontation with his father, the general, especially when the latter had a whip in his hand. Therefore, he made a left-about-face, goose-stepped to the edge of the deck, and jumped into the sea, but not before mumbling to his comrades, 'I prefer a bath to the punishment of my father . . .'

"In the end, everything turned out all right. However, there is still one thing we don't know. Was Lenin saved from being melted?"

This was how the story of the Sevastopol statue ended. As to the statue in front of the cultural headquarters at Vorkuta, a project still under study, the end there was not yet in sight . . .

It was time to go to bed. Time passed by quickly. The walls of the stove had gotten cold long ago, but inside the stove it was still warm. Therefore we stretched our feet inside and, sitting up on the bunk, shoulder to shoulder, we fell asleep.

All of a sudden, a terrible cry was followed by a lot of noise in the corridor. Asleep, we woke to feel someone feeling our feet. Outside, in the corridor, something unusual had happened. We pulled our feet back out of the stove fast and began to replace the bricks. From the corridor, steps could be heard getting closer to our cell . . . While we were replacing the last brick, looking into the stove we saw the stove door opening and someone, terrified, talking through it: "They were right here, comrade, right inside this stove!"

The person who was looking in had realized that something was missing at the back of the stove, on the inside, and taking a closer look had seen us two who, in our turn, were looking out through the hole to see what was going on out there. Things

were cleared soon. The man who cleaned the stoves every morning had started on his regular task. When he got to our stove and began to clean it with the special hook for ashes, the hook caught in our boots. What frightened him most was the fact that the boots, on top of everything else, began to move by themselves. His fright was so great that from that day on he did not want to work any more as a stove cleaner in that isolation building.

The decision of the administration was that everyone of us should get thirty days in that isolation building, with leave to go out to work, and that all the stoves should be covered with tin from top to bottom, in every cell. Incidentally, this order was later extended to cover all Vorkuta camps, so as to prevent anyone from sabotaging the Soviet state by stretching his feet into any of its stoves.

A few days later, the Russian who had started all this trouble (and to whom I should be thankful for the opportunity to hear the story about Lenin's statue), was severely and unexpectedly thrashed by persons on his own team, so severely that he had to be sent to the hospital.

But let me pick up where I left off. (I got carried away by the Lenin story.) I should like to point out that both on this occasion and throughout all of the nine years of my detention, I noticed something worth recording for sociologists. Here it is.

Throughout the centuries, in Romania, where I know the places well, and for the most part in all countries of Western Europe, the centers of culture and civilization had been the convents, monasteries, and holy places. Around them, little by little, out of spiritual needs, settlements had grown, developing into future boroughs, castles, craft centers, capitals of districts and countries. But here, in this new Soviet world of the twentieth century, the core of the social settlements and of the industrial giants is the dregs of any social group: the camps and prisons, out of which it was only natural that there should spring up a new mentality, different ideals, and different moral codes, new dimensions different from the rest of the world. Some of these I saw on the spot, and I deduced their bankruptcy from the statistics — given out as evidence of absolute values — as well as from the propaganda and ostentatious displays of "accomplishments" of an officialdom that was striving to show the world its vitality and prosperity.

THE MYSTERIOUS LITTLE BAGS

The shoveling of snow — a pleasant and entertaining task, for the time being — was nevertheless exhausting for the kind of physical shape in which we found ourselves. It quickly turned into a painful ordeal. This always happens in the case of any prolonged diversion or something that is compulsory. Consequently I did not go on shoveling snow. I noticed that there were some prisoners — but not too many — who took to this kind of work with pleasure, sometimes even with a certain fervor and with a kind of nervousness if the usual time for work was delayed, especially when they were supposed to go to the women's barracks.

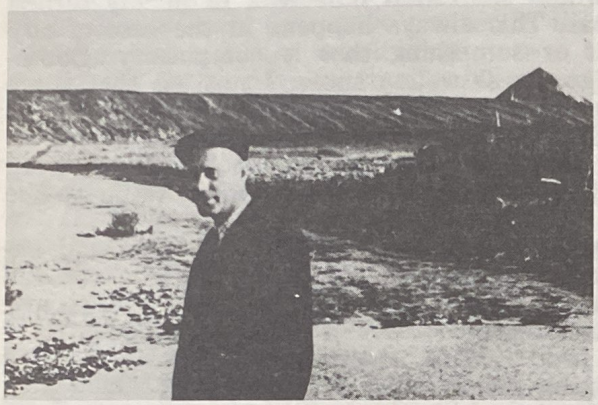
In the subsequent days I found out that the drive and impatience of these untiring musketeers of the Arctic Circle did not subside. As there is no effect without a cause, I said to myself, looking at their sheepish faces when they returned, that out of their small food rations, the women (most likely of a nobler nature than the men), had saved something which they secretly passed on to these big eaters with larger bodies to feed.

As it turned out later, my assumption was not altogether wrong. The men themselves revealed the truth because a secret is extremely difficult to keep. Why shouldn't one let the world know how important he is? What man can resist such a temptation? To experience something unusual and bury it in silence? Not to get some satisfaction out of the admiring looks from those around you is true only of a hermit living in seclusion. But these were fighters, meant for glorious feats and rich achievements, used to parades and fanfares after wading in blood.

One night, very late, during a terrible, whistling arctic blizzard which created an enchanting fairy-tale atmosphere, our musketeers, carried away in a flood of words, disclosed the secret of the waving handkerchiefs from the windows of the neighboring barracks, and of the kisses blown to those women behind the iron bars of the windows there. In down-to-earth terms, they revealed to us, at last, the mystery of the small bags of *kasha* found regularly on the snow. It was not simple coquetry on the part of the women. Simply, the women had taken bread out of their own mouths, at least ten to twelve spoonfuls of warm *kasha*, and ingeniously and secretly put it into the little bags for these men.

With so few spoonfuls of *kasha*, many dreams were born in

the ash-gray of the days spent here. What a strange thing it would have been if, instead of an apple, the cause of the original sin were a little bag of *kasha*. Temptation, eternally woman-inspired temptation, can romanticize even *kasha*.



A Romanian "set free" (that is, living under house arrest) near the Arctic Circle in the polar tundra. In the background, rock hill of Mine 7 where he worked for nine years

As with most secrets, this one soon became public. It spread around our living quarters, then passed on to the "penguins" (nickname for the common criminals).

From the penguins it was passed on to the guards; from the guards to the K. G. B. — completing the circle. It was then passed on back to us, who listened, repeated it with exaggerations and savory details.

Only after the secret got back to us did we innocents in the Arctic Circle, together with those romantic minstrels, find out what the source of the little bag really was. The bags were not meant as thanks for the snow-shoveling. They were not a sacrifice made for the benefit of some male prisoners. The bags were only miserable balls of rags, thrown out as trash after playing a role in the perverted satisfaction of natural female necessities, artificial satisfaction of sensual pleasures in these dismal circumstances.

The quarantine and the transfer period at Vorkuta went by like a bad dream, just as my childhood, the war days, and Heidelberg had passed by; as Lauter, Dresden-Radebeul, Nonnenkloster, Potsdam, Bautzen, Sachsenhausen, Brest-Litovsk, Krasni Pres, Vologda and the others had passed by; and as the memories of Hirsch Gorin were passing away.

CAMP 2 IN MINE 7

After a while, we were forced to walk in a convoy consisting of a few hundred prisoners, about twenty to thirty kilometers to Camp Number 2, affiliated with Mine Number 7, the center of the new coal basin recently discovered in the barren region of the Arctic Circle.

Orchestra of Camp 2, Mine 7, made up mostly of Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians. Conductor Rolf Weber (front row, in the middle): accordion player Fritz Meisel

Here, in Camp Number 2, I met the first Romanians. I remember Ion Dragos, originally from Bessarabia, the courageous leader of a group of Romanian freedom fighters who, after the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia, gave the newly arrived Soviet authorities a lot of headaches. He had been finally captured and sentenced to twenty-five years, deported, and brought to the Arctic Circle in order to break his will.

"Do you want to work?" he asked me as soon as we had met.

And without waiting for me to answer, he added quickly, looking me straight in the eye, "My boy, I'm not afraid of informers and therefore I tell you openly what you must know to make it in this barren land and to get out safe and sound. One cannot tell what will happen tomorrow, but I am convinced that we shall not die here, as these bastards want.

"If you intend to go back home, I advise you to get yourself a knife! Do you hear me? I am telling you to get yourself a knife, and right away!" He spoke in a harsh voice, shaking my arm. "After you get the knife, come to me to teach you how to handle it quickly and without missing your target. Otherwise, you must know you leave your bones here. Here, in Vorkuta, there are mostly criminals, and if you act the gentleman, they will either beat you or send you to Kingdom Come. Most of them are criminals. Both those who are locked up and those who guard them. You must show your teeth from the start, my boy, and make them fear you. To do this, you need two things: to be bold, and to carry a knife. Show both your teeth and your knife at the first encounter. This is their first law. This should be your first law, too. As in the forest.

"There is another thing you must take into account if you intend ever to return home: Don't work too hard! Don't let yourself be fooled by anybody's cock-and-bull stories. The Soviet authorities want just one thing only from you: to get as many tons of coal as possible. Now you pay attention and listen to me! Be smart and act like the cow, which is very intelligent. Yes, she is more intelligent than Man. Even if Man tries to entice her with bran or music, she never gives all her milk. Take a good look around you. Lie and cheat as much as you can, but make sure nobody smells you out. Keep your mouth shut! And whatever you do, keep it to yourself. When they send you into the mine, give them the same amount of coal as often as you can — until you drive them crazy. This is the only way out of this hell. If your answer to their villainy and duplicity is honesty, then you are stupid. My boy, fake groans and sweat as if you are lifting lead weights, but make sure they are really weights as light as a feather! Everyone does this here, and you should do the same.

"For a few years I learned in their high school. I know their only aim is to work us to death but to make sure that we kick the bucket slowly, in a 'humane' manner. But we must defend ourselves with everything at our disposal. You are young, my boy, and you must learn to pretend. If you don't, you are doomed

here! My boy, this is the entire lesson I am obliged to give you. Be careful!" And then Ion Dragos left, making me ponder his words.

"What kind of man could this Ion Dragos be?" I asked myself. He had hardly met me when he had started to talk to me, without any fear or restraint as is usual among prisoners who have just met. In one breath, he had let out what was on his mind, showing me all the ropes in order to protect myself against the hardships to follow. He especially had advised me not to do what he had done with me, that is, open up my heart and call things by their real names.

"You see," he said, "you were born in the same land as I. You lived among the same people. And this means a lot to me. Something awakened in me, something warm, a kind of thrill, when I heard that among the new arrivals was one from my own country. And I began to look you up. You reminded me of myself, of my childhood, of everything I had lost, and, of all this miserable life spent in vain. Towards you, you must realize, I have a different duty than towards these other people. You are part of me. We have something in common. We speak the same language. Maybe we think in the same way . . . The past with all its roughness and venom is rooted in us . . . We learned it in our schoolbooks, and it has come down to us through legends, fairy folk tales, songs, through our wooden churches hidden near the mountain passes and the villages in the mountains.

"It is my duty to protect you, even against your own self, should the devil prompt you to do stupid things. I would help you even if you were a scoundrel and sold me out. I had to tell you all this, because you must live. Not all of us should die. You must go back home and tell, even to the dead, about this paradise you now live in . . . After us, there must be a little bit of truth left . . . We must leave behind what the history books, the personal observations and writings of preachers and scholars from the beginnings of our nation have left. And this little bit of ours will help to bolster us against the fancy lies and misrepresentations of the official chronicles written in academies by evil scholars who sell their souls to save their skins for the moment."

This was Ion Dragos, the Romanian from Bessarabia. And this monologue was taking place thousands of kilometers away from Romania, between two individuals who were exiled among horrible criminals, in a region where most hopes get buried.

During my first days here, another Romanian was sent to me by this tutor, Ion Dragos. His name was Vasile Petre, or so he was

recorded in the Soviet files. His real name, however, was Vasile I. Gheorghe, and he had been the chauffeur of General Gherghel's car. General Gherghel was the commander of one of the Romanian armored car divisions, in the First Army. This Vasile Gheorghe, or Vasile Petre as the Russians had rebaptized him, had his own story, which should be made known to the world. He was to be one of the key witnesses at the trial for the strikes at Vorkuta, where I also was charged, together with other leaders. Vasile Gheorghe was serving a twenty-year sentence.

It may be that in order to eliminate witnesses such as Vasile Gheorghe, the unseen hand of the K. G. B. will find some despicable tool in the Romanian Secret Service, called *Securitate*. If so, I hope that this tool of theirs will think twice, because this simple man by the name of Vasile Gheorghe preferred prison to enduring the humiliation of his people. Such simple individuals, ready to sacrifice their own lives for the rights of their country, should be protected and not abandoned to die. Vasile Gheorghe belongs to this group of unknown heroes of the Romanian nation.

He had been taken prisoner after the defeat at Milerovo, which had led to the collapse of the Don front and where the armored car division of General Gherghel had fallen into the hands of the Soviets, together with the general's car, on November 12, 1942.

But let me jump ahead to that particular day when I listened to Uncle Petre's story (I used to call him Uncle Petre instead of Vasile Gheorghe) . . .

The Vorkuta trial had just come to an end, and after the wanderings which followed, I reached Camp 11 with prisoners from Iavas, near Potma. (I will give details later.) Here I met again many former acquaintances from the different camps to which the K. G. B. had taken me. Among these was Uncle Petre, the driver from the armored car division.

THE STOCKHOLM PETITION AGAINST THE ATOMIC BOMB

It was April, 1955. The Soviets had announced an important meeting in our camp, where a few speeches were to be made and where the appeal of the International Society of Fighters for Peace and Progress was to be read, under the humanitarian title,"'The Stockholm Petition Against the Atomic Bomb."

The part we — detainees in a punishment camp — were to play in this masquerade had zero consequences. The Soviets, in our name, speculated on the market of public opinion, moving old

ladies to tears, to draw sympathy, on one hand, and to raise hell at the expense of the Americans, on the other hand. Our fate, which only the Soviets could improve by giving us more humane accommodations and freeing us from the chains and misery in which they themselves had been keeping us, were of as much concern to the Soviets as the temperature of Mount Everest was to us.

But, a little here, and a little there — something is better than nothing. And so it came about that they showed up unexpectedly to deliver to us speeches about peace. They, the promoters of steadfast and continuous violence, exactly in the same way that they would later show us peaceful coexistence and noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations, a record they played over and over to all tunes for those small nations, striving to allay their fears and to soften their awareness of their own impotence, to lull their suspicions about an eventual dependence on these promoters of peace and to lullaby them into sweet dreams. But at the peak of the storm when the Soviet Union will be there swallowing, one after another, her smaller "brothers" and "sisters" in the "anti-imperialist" bloc, her perfidy will be thrown up to her; and the bear, snapping at the empty air, will have to pull back to save its face and what is left of the formality of "brotherhood."

As I was saying, in April, 1955, the Soviets held a meeting in Camp Number 11 in Iavas in order to launch the Stockholm Petition Against the Atomic Bomb. Among the numerous personalities who honored us with their presence was the Minister of the Interior of the Mordvinian Republic, where the district of Potma and the city of Iavas were located. This minister was also a colonel in the K. G. B.

The speeches ended with pressure that the petition be signed by all those who love peace throughout the world, to show solidarity against imperialist aggression and to prevent the outbreak of a new conflagration. The president even addressed us in a very jovial mood, urging us to ask questions in case things had not been clear enough and needed ampler explanations.

As usual under such circumstances, there was a moment of hesitation, and everyone kept silent. It was a dead silence, a painful silence. It was one of those psychological moments on which the Soviets depended, when to ask something seemed an outright favor. For you not to answer, to keep silent, to keep your mouth shut like a stupid person, would seem to be an insult. Still, we kept silent, as usual.

Suddenly I felt like looking for trouble! My tongue was itching, like a bumble bee droning when he wants to get killed. So, without raising my hand for permission to speak, or to ask that my name be recorded on the speaker's list, I jumped up like an anarchist and asked the following question in a rude manner: "What obligations and what political rights do we have?" The question came like a thunderbolt in a cold thunderstorm. The silence became even more painful and more embarrassing. Even if one of the other prisoners had the itch to speak, he would have refrained. The Soviet adversary had been taken aback. Hundreds of eyes stared at him in suspense. The president of the commission did not try to dodge the question, but he remained paralyzed as if by a stroke. It had hit him with full force. Any other question would have seemed inappropriate. He turned to the Soviet minister and they began to whisper something to each other. The entire festive board, seated at the red-clothed table on the stage, seemed to join in. The prisoners in the audience began to talk among themselves. A confused, disturbing murmur arose.

Painting by Julius Stuermer
The Soviet Angel of Peace

Finally, after a long deliberation, the president stood up and said, "You have no political rights whatsoever!"

How I got it out, I do not know, but my reply was quick. "Then there is nothing for us to sign!" And while I was wondering how much my last blunder was going to cost me here in this country of "free speech," the president continued the proceedings without resorting to protocol any more. "Are there any more questions?" he asked.

This time Uncle Petre stood up and we listened to all of his story.

"They call me Vasile Ivanovich Petre, but my real name is Vasile I. Gheorghe. I was taken prisoner at the Don on

November 12, 1942. I was the driver for the commander of the armored division of General Gherghel. My father's name is Ion, and my mother's name is Floarea. I attended grammar school for four years. This is who I am, and I should like Mister Minister to tell me, since he is present here, why did they change my name without my consent; and why have I been kept here since 1942 until now, April, 1955?

"They say I am not a prisoner of war any more. I know I am not a political prisoner. I was not sentenced. I am not Russian. I cannot even speak Russian well. I was born in the very heart of Romania, and I'd like to know what you want from me. You have dragged me through all kinds of prisons for criminals, calling me an anarchist and a rebel. All I have been doing is to tell you my true story, and I don't know why you don't straighten my case out. I have found out that you keep taking me for someone really named Vasile Petre who apparently worked in Romanian counterintelligence and whom the K. G. B. wants dead or alive. I have no idea who this other man is. I have kept asking you to make inquiries. Every year I have written about three or four letters to the Supreme Soviet, complaining about my situation and asking for inquiries. I used to hand the letters over to the political commissariats of the prisons where I was being held. I also wrote them two or three letters. Why don't you answer me? It's been fourteen years that you have kept me here, and I keep complaining that you have made a mistake which you must correct. Isn't there one honest man who will look into my case and clear it up one way or another? If you have any reason for it, please sentence me, even if you have no proof!"

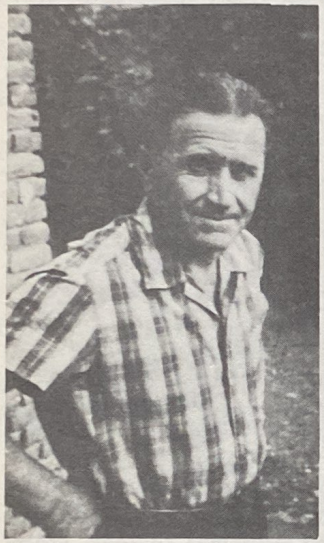
The Soviet minister interrupted him and motioned to him that he understood what Uncle Petre wanted. Then he told Vasile to write another request and give it to the political officer, from whom he, the minister, would take it, in person, before leaving. He solemnly promised that he would make inquiries and give him an answer.

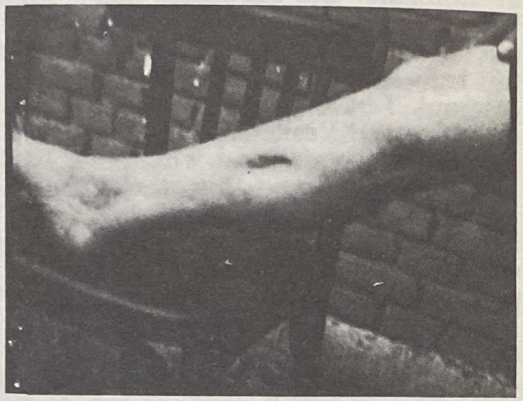
Uncle Petre, however, did not seem satisfied with this response and continued in the same vein. "Mister Minister, I think that all of you are a bunch of liars. You have been liars for fourteen years, ever since I have been eating this black bread of yours. I have heard only lies from you. For fourteen years I have been given promises like those I have just heard from you, and they were only empty words.

"I can tell one thing for sure, however: Had you been honest, during those fourteen years my letter could have traveled in

a wheelbarrow from here to my place, Valcele, in Ramnicu-Sarat, Romania, and the answer could have come back in another wheelbarrow — and all this mess cleared up by now. I am telling you, you people don't have a clear conscience. And because things are as I say they are, as stupid as you think I am, I am not going to sign your petition!"

Uncle Petre socked it to them, telling the minister where to get off, right in the middle of the meeting. "I am not finished yet! I still have something to say, to cool me off after fourteen years!" Uncle Petre continued. "You must know how things





Iavas, 1955

Uncle Petre pointing at the bullet marks left on his leg during the August 1, 1953 strike in Camp 29 at Vorkuta

are over here in the prisons, where they switch you from one criminal overseer to another. Look!" And Uncle Petre pulled up the left leg of his trousers and drawers, "Look and see with your own eyes the marks left by two bullets which your soldiers put through my leg during the August 1, 1953, massacre in Camp Number 29 at Vorkuta."

Uncle Petre wiped off his sweat and sat down on the bench. There was an uproar in the room.

The political officers and the watchdogs from the commission intervened good-humoredly to quiet down the commotion.

After this incident, the fate of this meeting — set up by emissaries who would carry this "message" with bloated pride to Stockholm — was sealed. The thin web of phony diplomacy and "refined" maneuvers is sometimes broken up by the rough winds of truth.

Since we got to this place in our story by telling what happened to Uncle Petre, let us conclude with the last act in this "Stockholm Petition Against the Atomic Bomb," where we had the Soviet minister as chief player. After Acts I and II, Act III followed as an ominous epilogue, which in fact repeated, like a chiming bell, the ideas voiced in Act I. The personal concerns of two individuals, expressed in Acts I and II (by myself and Uncle Petre), became a negative force nullifying the objectives of this drama staged by the Soviet stage managers.

When the uproar in the hall subsided, without giving time to the Soviet president to say anything more or to declare the meeting over, a voice with a strong Italian accent, from the back of the room, could be heard: "Who signs the Stockholm Petition signs his own death sentence! Better dead by an atomic blast than living in this Red paradise! Better dead than Red!"

The entire hall exploded in an uproar which could not be controlled. The meeting now came to an end without any official closing words. That is to say, everything planned went down the drain, and the Soviet officials were smart enough to call it quits and to stop pushing for the petition. However, since they could not spot the person who had tossed out this last bombshell, they quietly made inquiries as to who this was who had spoken last. They were under the impression he had left the room immediately after speaking.

The person actually was Father Pietro Leoni, the former representative of the Vatican for the Ukraine and Odessa, a man enjoying great prestige among the Romanians in our camp as well as among the other nationalities. His daring attitude towards Soviet officialdom and towards the treatment accorded us brought him the respect of everyone.

The same evening Father Pietro was summoned by the political officers of the camp, who charged him with public instigation of rebellion against the Soviet Union. Since the Father trusted his fellow prisoners, he denied the charges. To break him, the political officers did something the Soviets do only under extreme circumstances: They revealed the name of their

informer. Let us expose this fellow, since he has also been identified by his K. G. B. boss. He had been a paratrooper in the German army, from Munich. I do not remember his name exactly, but I do remember that he was the owner of a factory making typewriters. Even today this man could be traced; he could tell us more about his dealings with the Soviets.

Father Pietro was locked up again, but soon a miracle happened. He was set free after ten days.

A unique event in the history of the Soviet death camps was the decision of all Romanian prisoners in Iavas to celebrate together, secretly, the Orthodox Easter, exactly as in the good old days in Romania. In spite of all the difficulties and the deprivations, the Romanians celebrated this holiday by arranging a great underground feast, to which — as a token of Romanian hospitality — they invited two representatives from each nationality in the camp. Of course, Catholic Pietro Leoni was our guest of honor, together with our own bearded priest from one of the outskirts of Bucharest, Father Tepordei (who had his own story).

It did not matter that after this celebration, the Soviets raised hell and dealt out punishments. When you really want something and succeed in accomplishing it, you must be ready to pay for it.

Three days after the Easter festivities, Father Pietro was shipped to Moscow, from where he was sent (I heard) to Italy, after intervention by the Vatican. Apparently the Soviets were eager for some kind of favor from the Holy See or from Rome. The arrival of the news about Father Pietro's departure for Rome — when nobody expected it — brought us much hope and joy. A highly esteemed man, anointed by the Catholic Church; a man who had seen much and lived through many hardships; a man who — after the Soviets staged their demonstration against the atomic bomb — had taken great risks in stating his conviction that he preferred death by an atomic bomb to the Soviet hell; a man who left us with the conviction that he would tell the free world where he was going, the cruel and unbelievable truth about the country of "champions of humanitarianism and brotherhood among nations."

The epilogue to this Soviet demonstration: Uncle Petre, with whom our story of the Stockholm Petition Against the Atomic Bomb began, scribbled his complaint in the political officer's office, and handed it over to him, so that he, in turn, could hand it over to the Minister of the Interior of the Mordvine Republic. Well, for everyone's information, I must tell you, here,

that again Uncle Petre got no answer.

As to myself — who was told bluntly that I had no political rights even though they had asked me to express a political view on behalf of the "rights" of the whole world, to subscribe to an appeal written down on a sheet of paper to be distributed

Photo by Pater Jean Nicolas

Father Pietro Leoni, accompanied by his mother, received with cheers, in Rome, Italy, in May, 1955

among all nations — I, too, only received confinement in a cell and some bad marks against me in my personal file, a record that would follow me for the rest of my life wherever the Soviet cancer spread. But the bumble bee, stupid as he is, will never learn his lesson, and will continue to drone away ceaselessly with cliches about political obligations and rights (though aware we have none).

As to the other prisoners, the anonymous and the downtrodden doomed by Fate to stop over in this communist paradise — I can

say that, convinced of the rightfulness of their dissenting opinions, they began to make posters and write leaflets (with whatever writing instruments they could find and on whatever they could write on), warning, in different ways, all those who would sign the Stockholm Petition. It was something spontaneous and personal, done by people driven by something inside them which was against the masquerade to which they were being subjected every day. There was nothing organized in advance about it, and there were never underground conspiracies for that purpose, and any claims to the contrary are mere talk.

The fact that the Stockholm Petition was not signed (the same resistance happened to other manifestos which the K. G. B. wanted us badly to sign) did not mean that the prisoners agreed to the use of the bomb. On the contrary . . . Can anyone think that Father Leoni, a Christian priest, could have given his blessing to the disastrous effects of this infernal weapon?

But in this instance, however, it was different. We, the imprisoned who knew very well the Soviet potential for deceit and their perfidy, constantly avoided their "gifts." Our refusal to sign did not mean adherence to the use of the atomic bomb or sympathy with the Americans, who at that time had the monopoly on its use. Our resistance was a protest too, as Father Leoni said, a protest which was meant to convince the world of the danger and destructiveness of the policy of these Soviet wolves, dressed in sheep's clothing.

We were aware of the fact that the monopoly on the use of the atomic bomb by the then ally of Soviet Russia (who would become its adversary) — the United States — threatened the ambitions and thirst for hegemony by Soviet Russia. We were aware that the atomic bomb was the only weapon which inspired fear in this giant with feet of clay — the only weapon that could muzzle the bloodthirsty, insolent, and honey-tongued Soviet imperialists.

We knew, as did these high-ranking Soviet diplomats and political officers, that any intimidation of the United States, who held that monopoly on the bomb, that any incitement of world public opinion against the United States, any fiction about peace built up through propaganda, was to the advantage of Russian imperialism. So the Soviets wanted to fool the world with signatures gathered from irresponsible persons or from wretches like us who (as the Soviets themselves admitted publicly) had no political rights! What a silly masquerade, through which the Soviets wanted to frighten, or to gather any

advantage, no matter how small.

The truth is that the Soviets were working desperately to manufacture the bomb themselves. They wanted that bomb for themselves, to cut down the advantage now held by the Americans, to delay American experiments. At that time, the Soviets had not yet succeeded in stealing the secret from anyone, no matter how hard they kept trying. They did not have the brains themselves to invent the bomb, although they tried with tests carried out secretly within their borders. But the Soviet leadership spread the rumor inside Russia — even at the beginning of 1943 — that they did have the atomic bomb.

A fellow prisoner told me that he was talking to a Soviet soldier in the guard, who, showing off, said, "We have the atom bomb!"

"Rubbish! You don't even have cold weather in the Soviet Union!" my fellow prisoner replied, in order to provoke the soldier especially since the temperature outside was 46 degrees below zero Celsius. "The political chief told us, in our orientation, that we had the bomb," said the soldier.

My fellow prisoner, who had been captured at the beginning of 1942 and had not heard anything about 1943 Russian propaganda on the bomb, continued to ask questions: "What is the atomic bomb? What does it look like?"

"I'll tell you. At the beginning you don't see anything. Then, f _ _ _ your mother!" the soldier said, imitating the noise of an explosion with a whistling, falling tone with f _ _ _ , then a rising tone with the sounds of m-o-t-h-e-r. (This is a common Russian curse phrase.)

The soldier's description showed the total lack of any real knowledge on the part of the sergeant. This conversation, however, does tell us something very interesting, even if the soldier's description lacked any real knowledge but reflected only barracks humor. From this soldier's description, one can presume that at the beginning of 1943, Soviet preoccupation with research on the bomb was well in progress, or at least had the Soviets unusually interested since ordinary soldiers were talking about it.

It is possible that, in order to encourage and to inspire confidence in their own power, the Soviet government had deliberately given their soldiers a vague description of a weapon with which they would defeat the enemy.

To close this matter of the atomic bomb, I can say that the prisoners believed that if the Soviets had already had the bomb, they would have dropped it without any qualms on Berlin before

the Americans used it. The Soviets used many other similar stratagems on other occasions. Therefore, Father Leoni and the entire group of prisoners at Iavas would have preferred death by the bomb to the "happy life" under the Soviet administration, had it been up to them to decide.

But the whole affair of this encounter, as it unfolded, had a secondary implication, whose message should be understood by those theoreticians sitting in their conference rooms, theoreticians who would draw political conclusions only from the Marxist theory of surplus value. Any flirtation with the dictatorship of the proletariat as a new formula for a way of life, leads mankind only to degradation and despair, and those desperate people caught up in this terrible storm cannot be held down by any earthly or celestial force. Under Soviet communism, man reaches a point somewhere where the Gestapo, the K. G. B., the G. R. U. and all the police and secret services of the world become ineffective, because the desperate man transcends human limits of fear and becomes obsessed with a sinister delight in going to his death singing, with an angelic serenity, like the pioneers of Christianity in ancient times, like the members of a new religious sect, like the persecuted of any time.

When educated people acquainted with the protocol of world politics willingly reject the sophisticated ways of such protocols (as Father Leoni did) and wield the hatchet of brutal truth, preferring the rude and awkward language of someone like Uncle Petre, it must mean a great deal, because this is the only way to stop something that is seriously out of order. Yes, the Soviets were successful, but only to some extent and for a short time.

The illustrious monster Joseph Stalin has at least been removed from the Kremlin mausoleum since he was no longer alive to be brought down. Unfortunately even this was just another bit of Soviet theatrical farce. A farce performed in bad taste, useful only for settling certain accounts which did not serve in the least the main interests of those nations that had been enslaved by the Russians. Millions of martyrs in this century continue to groan under the oppressive burden of the most terrifying forces ever assembled by mankind, in a sinister sociological experiment which cannot even pretend to the scientific excuses offered by the vivisectionists of the previous century. This modern monstrous experiment — whose guinea pig is the whole of mankind, from Vladivostok to the very heart of Europe — goes on and on. Do those long-haired, bearded, filthy hippies, the rock stars, the peaceniks march in protest against them?

Socrates is gone. Jesus Christ has been banished. Their calls to wisdom, to the life springs, to peaceful meanings can no longer find room amidst that tenuous framework of the Soviet civilization, which calls itself humanitarian, "the most humanitarian civilization possible, free of any exploitation!"

Stupid, lamentably stupid grandeur!

But to return to our story — I must say that my good and bad memories are all linked to these two men, Ion Dragos and Uncle Petre — straightforward, men of steel, whose kind I had never met before and who were honest teachers and good protectors. As to the giant from Krasni Pres, Pyotr Ivanovich, whose name I never failed to mention to the "penguins" in the neighboring barracks and stockades, or anywhere I happened to pass through — I can say that his name was well known and respected.

There were so many, many people here! Everyone with his own story. Some of them were human beings. Some were nonentities. I approached some with kindness. I strived to avoid the others or was indifferent to them.

MISSING ROLL CALL: T. A. S. S.

Had anyone told me at any time that a man after ten years' detention in the Soviet death camps and serving most of that time in the Arctic camps, would be unwilling to leave those same camps, I — like others — would not have believed him. But I, personally, with a group of over 3,800 prisoners (in Camp 2, Mine 7, at Vorkuta) saw such a person. Saddening but true! He was from Latvia, approximately thirty-five years old, and had now served his full sentence (given by a military tribunal in Leningrad in 1937). He was the son of the mayor of a village on the Soviet-Latvian border and too young to comprehend the truth about the refined methods of Soviet communism. His father had fought in the First World War in the Tsarist army, on different fronts, and after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution — which brought about the fall of the Provisional government — had joined the troops of General Wrangel, in whose ranks he fought until the end of 1920, when he had returned to his native village in Latvia.

The knowledge and experience of the father over this period of time helped him with his fellow citizens and encouraged him to enter politics later on in the struggle against the communist propaganda spreading across Latvia through special agents infiltrating from the Soviet Union. He was very much disliked

by the Soviet government, who put him on their blacklist.

At some of the meetings he would take his son with him. In 1937, the very same year in which Stalin paid his debts to Marshal Mikhail Nikolaevich Tukhachevsky (and other high ranking officers) with bullets, one night a group of K. G. B. agents crossed the border into Latvia with the intention of kidnapping the mayor and some of his associates (as they gathered at a meeting) and to take them secretly over into the Soviet Union. The brawl that followed ended with dead and wounded, the mayor among the dead. In order to prove that their action had been a success, the K. G. B. agents took back with them the son of the mayor, along with other prisoners, the dead, and the wounded to cover any evidence of their murders.

The press at that time wrote a lot about the incident, but with no results. Most of those kidnapped died during the interrogations, from the inhuman treatment by the Soviets.

Harassed, taken from one prison to another, starved and beaten until he lost consciousness, the son was asked at every interrogation to give out the list of names of those who had collaborated with his father. (The Soviets assumed that they were persons living in the Soviet Union.) The son, however, did not know anything about his father's underground links. But who would believe him?

It was hard for him to endure the prison life and the treatment given him, but, above all, he suffered most from hunger. Since he was a small boy he had liked to eat a lot, but here food was denied him. The torture from the lack of food was more painful to him than the beatings, to which he became hardened. The Soviet investigators sensed this weakness and maliciously took maximum advantage of it. For days in a row they would give him just a tiny slice of bread and a little bit of water. Then he would be taken to the military kitchen where they put him in front of the pail that held garbage, from which he was given the honor of eating his full, like the pigs.

"Our pigs at home were better fed, but hunger and my own greed for food made me eat my fill," he told us. "This Soviet 'remedy' was applied to me every week: For six days I would get the tiny slice of bread and the little bit of water; on the seventh day they always gave me enough garbage to eat. And all this was taking place to the amusement and pleasure of the laughing Soviet onlookers, who made fun of me. This sad treatment ruined my health: My stomach reached its maximum distention when I unhesitatingly ate the waste food and garbage,

and it stuck to my spine during the week when I was on my starvation diet. My body adapted itself, but it ceased to function normally. No matter how much I ate, after a half hour my bowels would move, and I was hungry again. After a while my condition became worse than that of an animal: The more I ate, the hungrier I felt. Fate took me later through different concentration camps in the huge Soviet empire, but at the very beginning I was lucky to come across a physician who took pity on me and put me on the sick list and classified me as an invalid. Yes, at the age of twenty-three I was an invalid. The truth is that long before reaching that age I was doomed. Even today I cannot understand how I managed to survive the war period here in the wild and inhospitable North, where people were dying like flies. I cannot make any sense out of this life."

He continued: "You will be astonished at the fact that several times I had to swallow insults. I can tell you that there were even a few criminals who made fun of me for a bowl of *kasha*. And all this because of my insatiable stomach, the only thing that still torments me day and night with pangs deep within me, always crying out for food. Not seldom I won bets on my being able to eat a pail full of broth and macaroni (approximately ten or twelve kilograms, or five or six pounds), to which was added one kilogram of bread. After only one hour I would be able to swallow four bowls of soup in one breath — of course with bread — as if I had not taken a bite for days. My mouth was a bottomless pit which kept swallowing food . . .

"I was called to the headquarters of my camp and told that my term of sentence years would expire in a few days and that I would be set free! Poor me! I did not jump up and down as they expected. On the contrary, I kneeled down in front of the camp commander, Major Malik, and with tears in my eyes I begged him to keep me in the camp. I would do anything not to die of starvation, which was the fate of many free Soviet citizens. 'Ubi bene, ibi patria.' "

Naturally, the Soviet high commander of the camp could not grant such a request, though it would be a welcome piece of propaganda for other prisoners. So the commander gave orders to prepare all the necessary papers for the prisoner's release, of course with a lot of fanfare.

I have seen many people go to the tribunal to receive their punishment and leave the tribunal as soon as sentence was passed. Everyone reacted differently. For many, their doom had been sealed long before and consequently nothing could take them

by surprise except maybe to receive twenty-five instead of ten years!

The truth is that this man was desperate and troubled about his future. Here in the camp, good or bad, he was still sure to get food, whose quality did not matter for he was no longer choosy; but what would happen to him as a free man? With a little help from the high command, the story spread throughout the entire camp, especially since the prisoner, with tears in his eyes, had actually asked to be allowed to stay in the camp. (Major Lieutenant Prokhurov broadcast the entire story of this Latvian and the Soviet commander.) The jokes started right away, often received with amusement by some but more often bitterly condemned by most prisoners.

The Baltic colony decided to help him, though their means were very limited. The initiative was mostly taken by Father Vunderlickas and by the Jesuit Father Sisckievicius (both Lithuanians), by Viries (professor of art history), Tarant (a historian and former manager of the Folk Museum in Tallin, Estonia) — both Viries and Tarant were Estonians — and by the Latvians Metnis and Berzinis (the latter winner of the gold medal in 1939 at the World Skating Games in Oslo, Norway).

These individuals asked for bread and food waste wherever they could get it, and then dried it up like bread crumbs. Through a Romanian, George Gruzdov, born in Cahul, who worked at the clothing store for prisoners, the Latvian was dressed from head to toe and then given a "dowry" of blankets and sheets so he would leave with fond memories of us.

Finally the big day arrived. With great ceremony, he was taken to the camp gate. This man who was being freed was really something! Yes, this man — simple and modest by nature — instead of being happy, began to cry. He did not show the slightest sign of joy that his fifteen years' detention in this hell of a Soviet camp was over. He was crying, not out of joy, but because of his "misfortune": his release. With tears in his eyes, he begged every officer and soldier to intervene on his behalf, hoping that at the last minute, a miracle would happen and he would be allowed to stay in the camp.

Everybody faked promises. The officers and the soldiers acted their parts, but, in fact, they couldn't care less about an innocent man destroyed by them only because he had not been born a Soviet communist. A real-life drama was unfolding before our very eyes. Had Shakespeare or any other as gifted seen this, he could have written an immortal tragedy. It was the agony of

a human being who could have been my brother or yours — an agony one should see for himself, live, see and reflect afterwards on mankind's tragedy today. The Latvian's "big day" had indeed arrived!

At the camp gate, the camp leaders gathered alongside some prisoner gapers who had walked out of the barracks as to a market-place to watch this animal being unchained, who did not want to take to the free woods. Everyone, from "A" to "Z," was present. However, there was one exception: the great Soviet propagandists who write about the miserable human creatures suffering in the prisons of South Africa, Brazil, Chile, South Korea, etc. They were missing. They were not there to witness and to describe a Soviet miracle. (And Stalin was still alive!) What a pity! Had they described this miracle they would have undoubtedly won a Soviet state award or the Stalin Prize.

Who are these propagandists that were missing at this roll-call? None other than the agency T. A. S. S., usually present anywhere in the world. But this time T. A. S. S. was not there — actually or symbolically. It was indeed a slip by the K. G. B.

At the camp gate the Soviet Release Commission was waiting for the Latvian, and handed over to him all the papers and instructions that he would need in the future. His face white as chalk, the Latvian felt condemned to live from that moment on as a free man, threatened by death from hunger in the "free" Soviet society. Therefore his surprise was great when, after leaving the camp and going over to the other side of the barbed wire, he found in front of him, lined up as at a show, seven jute bags filled with bread crumbs and dried food waste. They had been brought to the gate ahead of time and with the approval of Major Malik. After being checked, they had been carried outside the camp so that the surprise would be even greater. The surprise was even bigger! The Latvian began to cry from joy, then to dance and make faces. Some of us thought he was going insane. In any case, the man was happy, at least for a while, since he was secure with "food." As for water, there was plenty of that everywhere, and there was the snow.

A Romanian fellow prisoner whispered in my ear so as not to disrupt the ceremony: "He doesn't need any other favor!"

Unfortunately T. A. S. S. was not present at this scene.

WHY ?

The war brought much misfortune and suffering to people. Many of them continued to suffer for years after it was over. In the Bolshevik scheme of things, everyone throughout the Soviet empire must be constantly reminded of the destruction caused by the war — the guilty and the innocent. The great military disasters of the war required that in the future a special service for military information be set up by the Kremlin. This special service had nothing to do with the present and looked only to the past. To gather certain military information that was thought to be important in future military confrontations, the Soviets picked out from the military a large number of officers well prepared tactically, technologically, and militarily and able to speak and write at least one foreign language. They also had to know in detail a section of the front where decisive battles had been fought in the last war, and all the stratagems of the general staff under which that officer had fought. They also had to know the mistakes made by the general staff and to guess what would have happened if the enemy had resorted to different tactical moves than the real ones.

In the Soviet camps there were many officers from those general staffs and many commanders of military units who were now paying for someone else's mistakes, for which they were now in prison. These former officers — Germans, Romanians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Spaniards, Russians from both sides (communist and anticommunist) — would gather in small groups and talk about their problems. Sometimes it so happened that — out of nowhere — a debate would stretch out indefinitely. As a simple man, I realized that these debates could have been stirred up sometimes by the Soviets, but cautiously because if the participants sensed the slightest hint of a provoked argument, they would immediately call a halt to the debate.

To get acceptance into one of these groups was rather difficult. Each member had to meet certain conditions having to do with knowledge of his language, history (in every detail), national mentality, weaknesses (observed or implied), his behavior in the daily life of the camp. As we shall see, the headquarters of the K. G. B. in Moscow sometimes tried to infiltrate their own agents into the camps without the knowledge even of the

local K. G. B. These agents had special orders to befriend imprisoned officers from different armies and to get as much information as they could out of them. Needless to add, such agents had to be both rough and obedient, friendly and humble, smart and cunning, greedy and self-controlled. These were the qualities required of an agent assigned to such a mission.

The brass band of Death Camp 2, Mine 7. Its members were mostly Baltics, Ukrainians, and other nationalities. American Roman Livinston is second from left to right (top row). Vorkuta, 1954

To assure permanent secrecy, the agent-prisoner would follow a certain route: shipment to Moscow and certain specified stopovers. He would acquire a fake file and the usual sentence of twenty-five years. (Otherwise his mission would not be possible.) Labeled as a traitor to his country, he could arrive at the respective death camp, where he would join the mainstream of daily life

like the other prisoners.

As I said before, the local K. G. B. would have no knowledge about the mission of the agent-prisoner in our midst. All they would know would be the fact that he was a detainee, sentenced to a certain number of years as recorded in the file which accompanied him. He was to hand over his secret information to a special investigative commission which made few but regular rounds through all the death camps, calling before them — at each round — hundreds of prisoners who were asked to go through some formality. Very often the commission would ask the date of one's birth (although it had already been recorded ten times over in the documents). Many prisoners were shown several pictures, about twenty or thirty of them, to see if they recognized someone, and if they did, then a report was written up. Red tape and more red tape. The reports always showed good results. In this way suspicion was avoided.

The missions of these agents were undertaken voluntarily. By undertaking them, an individual could turn into a boon or an impediment to the Soviet regime: a boon when his spying was well done, an impediment when he discovered the flaws in the Soviet system, no matter how fanatic, well intentioned, or cooperative he was at the outset.

Personally I came across such a prisoner-agent whose name was Vasili Andreevich Antonov, detained in the camp of Mine 7 at Vorkuta between 1950 and 1952. He had the rank of colonel in the Soviet army. He came from a family of workers on the outskirts of Leningrad. As a small boy he had been educated in the Soviet schools and higher institutions where, hard working as he was, he learned to speak perfect French and German. During the war he had been assigned special missions, especially at the front at Orel. After the conclusion of the war, during the reconstruction period, he had worked in one of the higher army echelons in Moscow. His vast knowledge and his relationships with certain persons gave him the opportunity to volunteer for this special mission as agent-prisoner — to gather necessary information for future cadres of Soviet officers mastering the art of war.

DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI !

"It is pleasant and beautiful to die for your country," the ancient Latin poet Horace wrote. Formally sentenced to twenty-

five years, Colonel Antonov was shipped to Vorkuta after passing through the Krasni Pres in Moscow, where for the first time he began to experience the life of a modern slave in the communist society — like a pioneer in the American Wild West. In the same manner as the other prisoners, he went from prison to prison without enjoying any special privileges and especially without anyone knowing the special mission entrusted to him.

Arriving at the camp of Mine 7, after his medical checkup, being physically in good condition, he was sent to work as a miner in brigade number 1, with which he stayed for one year. Then he was transferred to the ventilation brigade led by Vasile Grigarchuk, a Ukrainian from Romanian Bukovina. In the eyes of the local K. G. B., Antonov was a traitor and could not be recruited by them as an informer. As a matter of fact, Antonov himself refused any collaboration with that local K. G. B., and whenever he got the chance he defied the camp officers in front of all the other prisoners. Because of this he was well liked by the prisoners, but to win their sympathy he had to endure the harsh measures taken against him by the authorities. Not a few times he was locked up and thrashed by the officer on duty. The misery and the beatings, his only chance to see the cruelty of Soviet reality, made him finally, in the summer of 1952, refuse to go to work, so that he would be called in front of the commission and could ask for a transfer to another camp.

I do not know the reason, but for a long while this commission did not show up. The thrashing Antonov received for refusing to go to work (especially after he complained to the local authorities that he would write Moscow about these abuses) revealed him on the verge of desperation. He seemed to have lost all hope.

Antonov lay down on his stomach in cell 3 of the isolation building, the same cell in which, a few months earlier, I myself and my friend Singureanu had warmed our feet in the stove. In the meantime I had been sentenced again to three weeks in that prison, for anti-Soviet and pro-American propaganda. During the interval between his arrival at the camp and his confinement in the isolation building, because of his good behavior as a prisoner and because of his cultural background as a former officer and his extensive knowledge of the art of waging war, Antonov was received into the small, select group of former officers of different nationalities. As I found out later, Antonov showed a special interest in the "Central Front," which he apparently knew inside out. He always listened attentively, and when something

particularly interested him, he would provoke an argument that would include the smallest details. These debates stretched out for months at a time and were pleasant entertainment, especially when you were neutral and eager to find out the opinion of a German officer about a particular military operation and the countermovements of his enemy, with good or bad results.

The leadership of the Soviet death camps approved the staging of the Ukrainian play "Svatannia na Notcharivich," by Tobilievich, in Death Camp 2, Mine 7. The German Rolf Weber did the musical arrangement. Choreography was done by the Ukrainian Sayatchevski who also played one of the main parts: the sailor seated in the middle, first row. Behind him, to the right, the bald-headed fellow, is the former political commissar Berkovitz, head of the cultural activities of the camp, and also chief K. G. B. informer among the prisoners.

Vorkuta, 1954

Since the Soviet citizens had the right to receive parcels, from time to time, especially before the great holidays of Easter and Christmas, Colonel Antonov would receive such parcels with food. Then, in order to get even closer to the group of former officers, Colonel Antonov would give small tea parties in his cell, to which he invited his closest friends, that is, those persons in

whom he was most interested. (He could have received parcels more often but that would have raised suspicions, and that was what he least wanted to do.) By mere chance I became an observer at these debates, although I never dared ask even one single question, because during the war I did not fight on the Russian front.

My meeting Antonov in the isolation building, during the three weeks I was placed there, the fact that we slept in the same bunk and kept warm together drew us even closer. Every night, coming back from work, I would bring something to smoke and some food and, especially, the latest news. (Out of all the tenants of the cell, I was the only one with the right to go to work.)

After some sharp exchanges of words with the sergeant on duty, nicknamed "the Siberian," Antonov got that terrible thrashing which led him to that final decision. At that time, I had got him more medicine from Doctor Karol, a Ukrainian from Lithuania. I had some friends who had connections, friends like Sepp Komanchek, who worked in the barber shop and about whom I will say something later on. One night, after I got back to the cell from work, Antonov, running a high fever and suffering terrible pain, asked me to do him a confidential favor — aware of my connections. He told me that it was not necessary for me to explain my connections, that he knew I had them but he was never going to tell anything to anybody, especially to those in Vorkuta. He said that he was aware that my connections were the result of some business deals I had made, deals which he did not care about. The favor he was asking was very small, but at the same time, open to suspicion: He was going to write a few lines which, through me, had to reach the post office box of the K. G. B. headquarters in Vorkuta, approximately twenty kilometers away. (Such boxes can be found at every K. G. B. center, where you can drop letters which you do not want to go by regular mail.) I agreed to help him, on condition that he had to wait until my connection showed up. I did not ask him the contents of his letter. The next day I got him pencil and paper, and he sat down and wrote his letter without showing me the contents. But I could not resist my curiosity, in spite of the fact that I had told him I was not interested. I opened the letter. My surprise was not little to discover, instead of a text, figures and letters in codified form. This aroused my suspicion, but I still gave the letter to my man, who later that evening told me everything had gone according to order . . . . . .

I waited curiously to see the consequences, but I took all

precautionary measures, just in case . . .

That evening I had a longer talk with Antonov, especially about the miserable life in Soviet camps.

Two days later a group of K. G. B. officers from headquarters arrived at the camp gate in a jeep, called for Major Lieutenant Prokhurov at the gate, and then ordered him to immediately bring out prisoner Vasili Andreevich Antonov. Prokhurov, who knew the terrible condition of Antonov at that moment (beaten up), tried to gain some time by telling the officers that Antonov was at work. (Prokhurov's intention was to clean Antonov up, make him look neat, and to warn him to keep his mouth shut.)

The officer in charge of the work detail, and his aide, were summoned immediately and ordered to tell the K. G. B. officers the whereabouts of Antonov's work brigade. Without realizing what all this was about and what consequences it could produce, the officer in charge of the work detail promptly answered that Antonov was locked up in the isolation building by direct orders from the political officer. Without further comment, the K. G. B. team went directly there, where they ordered that Antonov be brought forth.

When Antonov appeared, the three officers stood at attention (as later reported to me by some of those present), and the tallest of the three, a K. G. B. colonel, took a few steps towards Antonov, saluted him and said, "Comrade Colonel, we await your orders!"

Major Malik, the commander of the camp, and all the other officers of the camp were dumbfounded when they saw this sudden transformation of this prisoner; they had had no idea who Antonov was and what part he was playing here for so many years.

It so happened that that very day, the work detail to which I had been assigned had finished its task of unloading some freight cars ahead of time. We were brought back to the camp after the man in charge of the food supply store signed a document proving that we had finished our job. When our team was about to enter the camp, Antonov was leaving. He saw me, walked over to me, shook my hand thanking me for the services rendered, and, in a whisper, told me not to be afraid because he would not say a word about our relationship and that everything would be all right and that he would not forget what I had done for him.

As I found out later, he left for Moscow. The soldiers on guard, each in his own way and with his own peculiar flourish, told Antonov's role in the mission.

In a few months I received a parcel from Moscow. The sender was a woman I had never heard of. On Christmas Eve, 1952, a second and last parcel was shipped to me from the same sender, but in the corner was a signature, "Alexei." I remembered the ancient Latin poet, Ovid, who wrote, "Finis coronat opus," the end crowns the work of art.

OTHER ANTONOVS WITH SECRET MISSIONS

In the camp of Mine Number 7, there was a man who had a mission similar to that of Colonel Antonov. He had been enrolled in General Vlasov's army. His name was Berkovitz, and he was a former Soviet commissar. In the camp he was working for the K. G. B. This was one of the methods of the K. G. B. to find out as much as it could, at any cost.

What happened with the information gathered by Antonov and these others like him, I do not know. However, I believe that young Soviet officers read avidly about the clairvoyance of Soviet military commanders during World War II, without being aware of the fact the information they had was really the work of these informers ready to sacrifice even their lives for an idea in which they believed and which they thought was good. But, as one French king once said, "After us, the deluge!"

In a quick transit through our camp of Mine Number 7, in 1952, was one man with a special mission (and known to the local K. G. B.). He was Major Malinovsky, supposedly sentenced to a twenty-five year term. But in an extremely short period of time he passed through all the "special security" camps at Vorkuta, organizing a chain of informers not connected with the K. G. B. headquarters. He was very well instructed and prepared for the task, but he had one great flaw. He liked to drink too much, and as a result he was constantly picking quarrels with the operative officers, in front of whom, in an argument, he blew his cover.

During the 1953 Vorkuta strike when he was not in our camp any more, one of his men revealed the names of some of those in his informers circle. All this happened after we found out that someone had leaked part of our plan for the strike. However, those in charge of carrying out the plan did not take it seriously (more about this later) and there were some attempts to change things here and there at the last minute.

Whether Malinovsky was a relative of the Soviet Marshal

Malinovsky, I do not know, though he claimed he was related. And what happened to him later on, I do not know, but in any case, he was one of the dirty K. G. B. tools in the Soviet camps.

Painting by Julius Stuermer
The former communist, K. G. B. agent, later on dumped by his Soviet masters: Lieutenant Colonel Alexandrov

The names of some of these agents, placed in different parts of the world (in Scandinavia, for example), are well known. Perhaps the world public would like to know what eventually happened to them after the war, especially since they abruptly disappeared.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexandrov (not to be confused with the colonel at Potsdam whom I have already mentioned), now at Vorkuta, claimed he had been the head of the Soviet Secret Service in Scandinavia. But I, like others, thought that he had really been somewhat lower in rank, probably head of a small office and nothing more than that. Alexandrov was a very smart man. He had mastered several foreign languages and spoke Swedish very well. To my astonishment, he had some information about the building of the oil refinery in the southern part of Sweden (the one connected to Himmler that I mentioned earlier). He had a mission similar to those of Antonov and Malinovsky.

WATCH YOUR TONGUE !

A case similar to those just mentioned was that of Alexei Alexeevich Nikolaev, who had been a double agent working at the same time for the K. G. B. and German counterintelligence. Nikolaev had fallen into the web of the German S. D. a few years before the outbreak of the German-Polish hostilities, by establishing relations with some German engineers and technicians

who were building a factory in Leningrad. He had become one of the German agents who — long before the start of the German-Soviet hostilities in 1941 — warned the Germans that the Russians were preparing for a military strike against Germany, when he was exposed by a Soviet friend. He saved himself at the last moment by crossing over to the German lines. The end of the war had caught him in Austria, but, unfortunately for him, the British and American authorities, in order to show their great friendship towards the Soviet Union, had handed over entire army units from General Vlasov's forces (together with all subunits), made up of different nationalities that had fought alongside the Germans. Assuming a false identity, Nikolaev had managed to survive the hunt for him and others like him between 1945 and 1947. But again a good friend of his had denounced him to an investigation commission. He had been sentenced to twenty-five years but had he been exposed earlier, his sentence would probably have been the death penalty. And in the case of individuals like Nikolaev, the death sentence would have been carried out quickly.

Here at Vorkuta, Nikolaev could not be enticed again into a team of camp informers by the K. G. B. Even the most attractive promises could not make him change his mind. He knew what it meant to be tagged "traitor to the motherland." And he knew a great deal about the underhanded dealings and secret work of the K. G. B. and of the G. R. U.

During the Vorkuta strike, Nikolaev kept aloof from the events around him but was always ready to offer his opinion or advice when it was opportune and, more often than not, most welcome advice (sometimes at the last minute). More about him later.

The political prisoners in the Vorkuta camp, like all the other prisoners in the thousands of camps all over the Soviet Union, were always up to date on current political events and any future plans, in which they always looked for some ray of hope for tomorrow. In each camp there was information acquired through the radio, the press, or just from the newly arrived. The political prisoners analyzed that information, and then each of them in his own way repeated it as the latest news. Therefore it was no wonder that the political prisoners were up to date, down to the smallest detail. The K. G. B., through its own channels, spread counterinformation to misinform the prisoners and to provoke conflicts among different nationalities in the camps.

I am not sure if the United Nations Organization at Geneva or New York ever debated the real world situation with such passion

as in those death camps. Of course, in such talks, which were in secret, only individuals with professional and scientific knowledge ever took part. (Thank God, there were plenty of these.) Fortunately I was given permission to attend some of these debates without being asked to speak my mind. I think that many diplomats and politicians — after reading these lines (if they ever do) — will realize that there are realities which they have overlooked.

China, the Soviet Union, the American democracy and Western Europe — what chances do they have for survival? Which of them will become the dominant power? This question was casually debated in barrack 37, Camp 2, Mine 7, at Vorkuta between 1952 and 1953.

The multinational empire of the Soviet Union has a surface area of over twenty-two million square kilometers and a population of approximately two hundred fifty million; whereas China has a surface of nine million six hundred square kilometers and a population of over one billion. While the territory of the Soviet Union has a potential productivity of 78%, the territory of China has a potential productivity of under 37%.

In 1931, at the time of the beginning of the civil war in China, and later on, when the Japanese invaded Manchuria, the war spread over the entire Chinese territory. It came to an end in 1945 when the Japanese Empire surrendered unconditionally to the Americans. The great natural catastrophes in China between 1946 and 1947 caused great destruction and loss of lives. (The exact figure is still unknown today.) The beginning of the civil war in 1949 brought about other thousands and tens of thousands of human sacrifices because this war lasted from 1949 to the end of 1951.

In conclusion, figuring out that from 1931 until 1952 there was a lapse of twenty-one years, twenty-one years of alternate peace and war, births and deaths, successes and failures — all in the same territory with the same surface area: What happened to the population? Did it increase or decrease? If we total up those twenty-one years, we will suddenly realize that out of those twenty-one years, two thirds were years of war and one third was years of peace. However, during that same period, the population of China — according to all official statistics published in 1931 and subsequent years — increased from 450,000,000 to 580,000,000 by 1952 — that is, 130,000,000 since 1931. What is going to happen twenty years from now in China, which at this moment has a population of over one billion — assuming that

the next twenty-one years will be years of peace and that births will continue at the same rate within the same territory? N. Chamfort once said, "When castles wage war, huts have peace!"

In the Soviet Union with her immense territory, there were, in 1933, 180,000,000 souls. Since 1933 the territory of the Soviet Union has expanded through gains of Karelia (snatched from Finland), Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Prussia (East Germany), a big chunk of Poland, Ukraine, Bukovina, Hertza and Bessarabia (taken from Romania with Hitler's blessing), and other territories in the extreme east. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union has at present a population of 250,000,000. Why didn't the birth rate in the U. S. S. R. increase faster after the Second World War when as a victorious state the Soviet Union had all the opportunities for improved conditions? The blame has been put on German Nazism and the deportation of peoples by the Nazis, especially after the enormous destruction of the war. What is not told is the fact that slavery, so much vilified by Marx and Engels in all their theories, is highly developed here in the first socialist state of the world. Those 42,000,000 detainees and deportees are one reason for the drop in the birth rate.

Today China has over one billion people. Twenty years from now she will increase her population considerably, but her territorial area will remain the same and her productivity will increase by only a small percentage. Her territory, with its geography, does not permit more: Half of it is three thousand meters above sea level, and in the north the Gobi Desert cannot yet be tilled for growing crops. The Chinese people are known as hard working, modest people, aware of their country's strength provided it has intelligent and good leadership. History bears witness to that. So far, so good . . . but if the Chinese population increases too much, where will the food come from? The day will come when they, compelled by adverse natural circumstances, will begin to think they must expand their territory. In which direction will they expand?

The Indo-Chinese peninsula is too small, and the eventual development of its land can take too much time. India is also in the process of continuous population increase. Hence any expansion in that direction should be ruled out. To the southeast there is Taiwan, which is Chinese territory inhabited by Chinese people, though not a great source of income and food. Japan is too small as a territory and already has too many people. The American continent is too far away and the Pacific waters have

too many sharks.

The North and the Northwest remain the only directions in which the Chinese expansion could eventually and successfully go. The vast Siberian territory is tillable and contains plenty of raw materials — and it is in the immediate vicinity of the Chinese Great Wall.

Now, would a Chinese expansion into Siberia be accepted by the Kremlin? Certainly not. Hence a military confrontation between these two communist giants is most likely inevitable if the democratic forces fail to overthrow the two bloody communist tyrannies. Goethe wrote in *Doctor Faustus*: "Have you never been worried?"

At the just mentioned discussion there were also three Chinese: two officers from the General Staff of Chiang Kai-Shek's army and a former political agitator from Mao's army. They were asked to express their opinions, that is, their personal opinions about a Chinese expansion, with its pluses and minuses. Years have passed since that time, but the hypothesis put forward by these three Chinese can still become a reality. Indeed, if their hypothesis was considered possible in 1952, it is possible in the near future.

The Sino-Soviet border has a length of over seven thousand kilometers. What emergency measures could the Kremlin take if, one day, the leaders from Beijing — under the banners and slogans of *glasnost* and *perestroika* from one end of that border line to the other — should amass a few million Chinese with their equipment, brandishing flags and carrying portraits of the Kremlin leaders and paper slogans in capital letters such as "Glory to the Kremlin leaders!"?

And if this Chinese horde would then walk calmly and steadily northward in a Peace March? The first wave, as paradoxically as it sounds, might then be followed by a second one, and . . . in one or two months there would be more Chinese than Russians in the Soviet Union.

What would the Kremlin leaders do under those circumstances? How would the Soviet army react? Would it open fire on this multitude asking for Peace under the banner of Friendship and with the emblem of the Peace Dove sewed on the lapel of each Chinese? Would the Soviet hospitality, so much trumpeted in all corners of the world by T. A. S. S., be up to the task when faced with all these people marching in the name of Peace and Friendship?

Wherever they passed during those first days of the Peace March, there would be not one blade of grass left. Everything

would be devoured, consumed, until there would be nothing left but barren rocks. You, Soviet soldier, Soviet officer, brought up and educated in the revolutionary spirit as a defender of the working class; you who years in a row, have been brainwashed with tales of ugly feats by the Nazis who shot down defenseless people — children, women, the elderly — would you dare open fire against this multitude armed only with their slogans of Soviet propaganda?

At that time, everyone present at such debates agreed that the Russians would open fire because their rear was secure. However, their faith that their rear was secure was not warranted because the representatives of the Ukrainians and the Baltic states jumped in with a counterargument. The rear of the Russians is not secure if the Chinese should promise complete independence to the Ukraine and the Baltic states. The backyard of Russia, that is, Siberia (also known as the Siberian backbone), would rise as a single man against the Russians, because ninety per cent of the Siberian population are survivors among the deportees and the political prisoners "canonized" by the Kremlin's leaders in remote Siberia. By the mass deportation of Ukrainians and Baltics to Siberia, willy-nilly, unofficial Siberian republics of the Ukraine and the Baltic were formed. Yes, this is the actual truth!

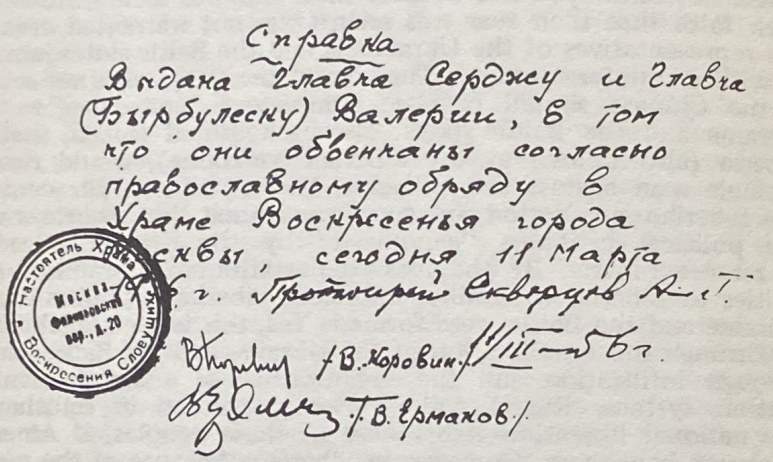
Through the Russification of the Ukraine and the Baltic states, through infiltration and the organization of a draconic information system, Russia will eventually succeed in smothering the national liberation fight there of these peoples, if America does not help them. However, in Siberia — because of the newly created circumstances — among the political detainees and their descendants (idealistic fighters of free countries), where the ranks for a common cause are closed, the Russians and their K. G. B. would stand no chance at all. The day will come when these Ukrainians and Baltics in Siberia will declare their cause and will achieve the liberation of their beloved countries, and the sacrifice of their forefathers will not have been in vain. A Latin saying goes: The drop of water splits the rock, not instantly but after repeated dripping . . .

To show off in front of the rest of the world and to fool the West, the communists in the Kremlin wear two mantles. They put on one mantle when they travel abroad, showing off their cultural heritage, Russian civilization, and "religious liberalism." They put on the other mantle at home when they sponsor talks about treaties of nonaggression, accusing the West of bad faith and its unwillingness to accept honorable and advantageous

proposals that benefit the international working class.

At home they do not have to dress so gaudily! They dress as simply as possible to show the working Ivans (who do not trust them any more) that there is no class differentiation except for the "insignificant" fact that they are accompanied by personal bodyguards of huge gorillas, even bigger and more numerous than those with any head of state in the West.

The Anglican, Protestant, and sometimes even the Catholic Church bow reverently before the Patriarch of Moscow, who


Справка
Выдана Главна Сердже и Главна
(Бырбулеску) Валерии, в том
что они обвенчаны согласно
православному обряду в
Храме Воскресенья города
Москвы, сегодня 11 Марта
1956 г. Протоирей Скворцов
Настоятель Храма Воскресения Словущего
Москва Филиал 009., А-20
В. Хоровин 11/III-56 г.
Т.В. Ермаков

Marriage certificate issued by a "Christian Orthodox" church in Moscow. It is worth noticing that the sheet used was torn out of a school copybook and has no letterhead

plays the part of a priest but who is no less than another K. G. B. agent carrying under his priestly garment the Red party card and the pistol.

They fool you, all right! On the one hand, peaceful coexistence as the Soviet press trumpets it every day; on the other hand, the death camps with their victims about whom nobody talks. What kind of a world do we live in? German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese militarism were defeated in 1945. What is the Soviet doctrine but another supernationalism — a super-

communism and a supermilitarism? It may sound funny, but the day may come when we shall speak of the super-Soviets!

In January, 1956, Nikita Khrushchev was the one who officially condemned Stalinism, stigmatizing Stalin's actions and revealing the crimes he and his collaborators committed. Among other crimes, Khrushchev accused Stalin of those committed after the farmland collectivization of 1932-33, giving out a figure of approximately 33 million murdered farmers. Until that time Stalin had been an angel, even more than that — a god! One single fact Khrushchev forgot to mention — namely, that he himself, together with the other collaborators he had pointed the finger at, took part in Stalin's crimes. Yes, they who after Stalin's death ascended to the throne formerly occupied by the Tsars.

CERTIFICAT DE CUNUNIE

Marriage certificate issued by the non-communist Romanian Church in Paris, France

From 1917, that is from the time of the Bolshevik Revolution in October, until today, those in the Kremlin finance protests, strikes, and anti-state organizations in the West and in the non-Soviet world. But these activities are forbidden in the Soviet bloc. Yes, they do not allow their people even to talk about human rights. This is some freedom, indeed!

WESTWARD EXPANSIONISM

Here is the hypothesis for Soviet expansionism westward, together with a vast and detailed project for such expansionism as far as the Atlantic coast as a stage in an overall operation. Actually, this scheme was taken from an older plan conceived between 1922 and 1923, in which Soviet ideologues of that time had advocated and drawn plans for, as yet, unestablished borders for a Soviet empire.

This scheme was confided to me by Lieutenant Colonel Alexandrov, the same who worked in Scandinavia, and by a colleague of Alexandrov, Boris Vasilevich Pryatin (a former colonel in the Ministry for State Security, who worked in the Soviet secret archives in Moscow).

The occupation of the West and especially of Great Britain is only a matter of time for the Russians. It is to be carried out quickly following a well-planned military operation. The Americans will be isolated in time and unable to act.

Soviet troops will not invade Western Europe in an open use of brute force and destruction; they will go in after being "invited in" by Western governments — a move similar to that followed in Afghanistan in 1979. They will go in to "help" the working class get rid of capitalist exploitation. In the meantime, Moscow will continue — for some time in the future — her game of duplicity in international politics within the United Nations tribunal, promoting detente throughout the world while at the same time infiltrating her communist agents subversively into all countries regardless of their political affiliations. Moscow will never renounce this strategy.

There are several well known cases of Soviet agents who, later on, realizing the evil intent of the cause they had embraced, rebelled and ended up in prisons or prison camps where they wept and cursed their fate.

The Soviet plans for conquest envisaged the subversion of European nationalism, which had to be destroyed by all means at their disposal. Their previous successful experience in stifling the nationalism of the Ukrainians, the Baltics, and the peoples of southern Siberia led them to the hypothesis that a similar destruction of nationalism in the states of Western Europe would have a double effect, namely, killing European nationalism as a whole, and secondly, the bringing down of Western Europe

in particular to the same level of culture and civilization as that of the Soviet empire, which would then eventually extend from Vladivostok to Lisbon and from Murmansk to Sicily.

Boris Vasilevich Pryatin even gave me details of how this Soviet plan would be carried out and the places where the peoples of the new Soviet empire would be deported from one end of the empire to the other. The Germans, for instance, would be transported to the eastern part of the Urals; the Italians would be sent to what is today Turkmenia; the Romanians to the Caucasus. (Some might consider the Romanians more lucky in this respect, since the Caucasus does not seem as bad a place as Siberia.) The neighbors today of Romania, the Hungarians — considered to be of a quicker temperament — would have to go back to their original homeland (or somewhere near), around Baikal Lake in southern Siberia near Mongolia, a place which undoubtedly would remind them of the beautiful Lake Balaton in present day Hungary.

This huge shift in populations and peoples would, in the end, depend entirely on railway cars, which have to be loaded with people and then return with other people. For example, Hungary could be evacuated in eight days if there were enough railroad cars available. The interesting point is that in the Soviet plan there was no consideration of the question as to how many people would survive such deportation. As a matter of fact, the leaders in the Kremlin and the ideologues who thought up this plan were not interested in whether all the deportees would ever reach their destination. Those who survived would be those with strong physiques, and this would be determined by whether they survived. In conclusion, this forced hodge-podge migration would close the chapter on nationalism. No one would be able to claim that he was born in his new home as a national there, and everyone would have to use the Russian language to communicate with others.

The Russians also have in mind that the peoples of the East — from Vladivostok to the Ural Mountains (whom they consider to be an inferior civilization) — should be introduced into Western civilization, while the peoples of the West (belonging to a superior civilization with its age-old traditions and customs) should be spread out and pushed towards the East. It is most likely that those from the East would have difficulties in adjusting to the West, to its customs and to the standards of living which they would find there; but they would eventually adjust if the Western peoples were introduced into their midst.

The Russians even set a time limit for such adjustment, ten years.

It would be much more difficult for those from the West, thrown into a civilization inferior to their own. Many of those who survive the deportation ordeal would eventually commit suicide, unable to stand great disappointment. But in the end, others would start rebuilding their own civilization as they had known it in their places of origin, just as the American colonists, the pioneers of the American wild West, had done. For these peoples from the West, the Russians set up an adjustment period of twenty years, during which time their level of civilization would have to be temporarily lowered through forced labor in camps and prisons.

Painting by Julius Stuermer

The difference between the USA and the USSR in three phases: (1) USA: Disarming; USSR: Arming. (2) USA: Cease support of freedom fighters; USSR: Enslavement of free nations. (3) USA sentenced by a tribunal set up by the Soviet government; USSR rules the world. The members of the Soviet government congratulate themselves

Meanwhile, everyone, from child to old man, would have to sing praises to the Red tsar in the Kremlin and to the Soviet communist rulers. This is what the Russians are determined to accomplish.

"Favete linguis!" as the ancient poet Horace used to say, referring to the pagan Roman priests offering sacrifices to their gods. In plain English, "Keep quiet!"

Years and years will pass before those who called the Soviets to save the working class of the West realize their big mistake! But by that time it will be too late! Freedom will be indeed lost forever!

For the time being, the saving of the West from communist conquest and Soviet imperialism is tied to what happens in China. Hopefully, the American democracy, which has its own ulcers from infestations long ago, must take heed and operate on those ulcers, restore the world's health, and convince the industrialized nations of the world that China has to be industrialized too. Only in this way can Soviet imperialism be forced to concentrate a great part of its strength against China and be unable to strike at the West first and afterwards at China.

DEATH CAMP 408: THE MOUSE AND THE ELEPHANT

Among those with whom I could get rather close there were two former colonels in the Soviet army, each sentenced to twenty-five years for "treason against the Socialist Soviet motherland." One was Russian and his name was Boris Vasilevich (nicknamed "the Beard" because of the beard he had grown); the other one, whose name I do not remember, was an Armenian, an intimate friend of the Armenian Frenchman Armand Maloumian.

In 1948 these two had taken part in the great uprising of the detainees in Camp 408, located approximately seventy kilometers south of Vorkuta, somewhere in the neighborhood of Chum railway station. Since the death sentence had been abolished at the end of 1947, all the two colonels could get was the maximum punishment, which was twenty-five years. Their getting out alive in the slaughter which took place in that camp was due only to mere chance; severely wounded, they fell into the hands of some K. G. B. officers eager to get ampler information. Those colonels had been considered too valuable a prey for the K. G. B. to shoot them right away (which they could have justified in the circumstances of the general turmoil).

The Russian really did love his country, in his own way. Especially he loved the Volga, the Russian plain, and the tundra, which called to him out of that darkness. But this did not make him any less a traitor in the eyes of the Soviet authorities. After taking Moscow in 1812, Napoleon said, "Who could have thought that this land, yearly cursed with six months of winter, three months of floods and mud, and the other three months of scorching sun, thirst, and wild winds, could be called 'motherland' by some crazy people!"

But the Russians know and appreciate truths unknown to Napoleon. They love this big and crazy country, as Esenin used to call it. For centuries they have been trying to patch it up, to fix it, paying — in exchange for the hostility of an officialdom blinded by gigantism, paralyzed by impotency and the dreams

of impostors — paying in blood and detentions and deportation to Siberia. Here there is a psychological paradox and a powerlessness that is eloquently expressed in the simple words, "It doesn't matter" ; and in a dream, "There will be light," words one finds repeated daily, hundreds of times in an obsession, no matter the difficult circumstances, by millions and millions of inhabitants in this land stretching from the river Dniester and from Vladivostok, to the Caucasus, Novaya Zemlya, Yalta, and Murmansk.

The Russian "traitor" Vasilevich, in tears, told me about the dreams of "Holy Russia" and about the endless quagmire in which she now found herself, a quagmire from which they could not get out because there was no solid ground on which to stand. In the name of a dedication to a "better life," instead adamant wills, selfish desires, opposing interests, the caprices of the moment, and silly pride had reached out and clashed with each other with an intense enmity, rejecting, canceling out each other, or paralyzed to a standstill.

The Russian said, "Things were the same under the Tsar. They remain the same under the Soviet government. Things did not change at the top, nor at the bottom. They will always be the same. We all love, want . . . but when the time comes for action, our wings fail us . . . and we seem to have lead in our feet . . . Exactly as Turgenev described us in *Asia* . . . And we keep dreaming, taking refuge in activity and yawning in the pleasant feeling of laziness . . . From time to time the force of Evil stirs us and then we start chopping off heads. Perhaps the best heads, the most innocent heads. Or we are seized by the fervor of building until one day we give everything up and start tearing down all that we have built."

This is the way things were in Camp Number 408, where the two colonels had reached the last stage of the drama of their existence. Under very harsh conditions, the camp administration and the local authorities had decided to build a railway to the Urals. The great majority of the detainees in the Urals were Ukrainian and Russian volunteers from the army commanded by General Vlasov, who had fought against the Soviets alongside the Germans for the independence of the once "Holy Russia" and of the Ukraine.

Unfortunately the stories now told me by the two colonels failed to give the details regarding the uprising there. In the few things reported by them, niggardly and in installments, and by the sadness in their faces, which suddenly became expressionless,

one could understand that those who first rose up against the prison treatment and the prison abuses were really common criminals who had disarmed the guards and seized their guns and then the guns in the storehouses, in an attempt to get away from the Urals.

"It was a matter of life and death, my boy! The fights against the Soviet troops were not easy at all! It was an unequal battle, we with intense dedication and a few handguns and they with automatic weapons and artillery fire. But we fought desperately, mice against elephants — because we had no way out!

"You should know, my boy, that such things are glossed over by our contemporary historians, who keep silent about them. The scribes keep their mouths shut, and if they want to talk, they only falsify and embellish one side of the story, thereby achieving status as academicians and distinguished historians granted awards from officialdom. And this is not bad at all, since common sense only guides their steps towards the happy goals they have been seeking. Gold takes care of the needs of tomorrow and provides peace. Peace in which to relish their glory as academicians and their honored status, glorifying the Soviet rulers and this new epoch."

By helping raise these modern pyramids, these historians write their own original history because, to our eyes, recorded history does not record the deeds of the multitudes. However, beyond these monuments, beyond the sphinx-like silence, there are details, causes, figures, news which circulates, from individual to individual, from mouth to mouth, tacitly and anonymously, that tell of the despair of those who had no history written about them, an oral history that circulated through different camps and prisons all over the Soviet empire; circulating through the places of work, passed along with transfers of peoples. There are witnesses, there are heroes of our contemporary times, who reveal an altogether different story from that of the academicians.

In Camp 408 up until the uprising, thirty thousand persons died from starvation, disease, of the cold, harsh labor and neglect — slow deaths or violent deaths — their hopes dashed. The Ukrainians tried the only possible way out. Better dead than living in such conditions. This was their attitude, and so they rebelled, desperately attacking the guards, seizing their guns, and proceeding to free prisoners from other camps around them. The uprising spread towards the Urals. Banners were raised: the Ukrainian flag and the black flag of death. Under these flags — of freedom or of death — they clashed with the Soviets, who

then proceeded to crush them under the tyrant's heel. Their chances were indeed very slim, but they fought until crushed by artillery fire and bombing by aircraft. The Soviet state had the means of destruction and it did not spare them.

Contemporary Soviet history says nothing about all this, and the Soviet press (and the Western press, too) — those noisy trumpets of trifles and scandals — did not hear of these wholesale murders, and so of course did not record them. O, tempora! O, mores!

After these reprisals, the poor creatures who rebelled, that is, those who got out of the line of fire and the path of the tanks, thought back about it all, and I later heard them say that it had been worth it to try. Notwithstanding the reprisals and their violence, the number of deaths was fewer than the thirty thousand who had previously died of Soviet starvation.

Talking proudly about this attempt to free themselves from Russian slavery in 1948, the Ukrainians — wherever you meet them — say that they are always ready to exchange this slow death for a quick and violent one, when it is under the banner of liberty. There was not a single death camp through which I passed in which at least half of the detainees were not Ukrainians.

Here in Camp 2 of Mine 7, out of three-to-four thousand detainees, prisoners of war, and deportees, over one half were Ukrainian nationals. Then in numerical order, came the Germans, the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Hungarians, the Romanians, and then the others. "Homo homini lupus." ("Man is a wolf to man.")

END OF VOLUME I

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nations and people
decimated by the Soviets
and their struggle to survive

ISBN: 0-9624144-0-9